



던전 디펜스

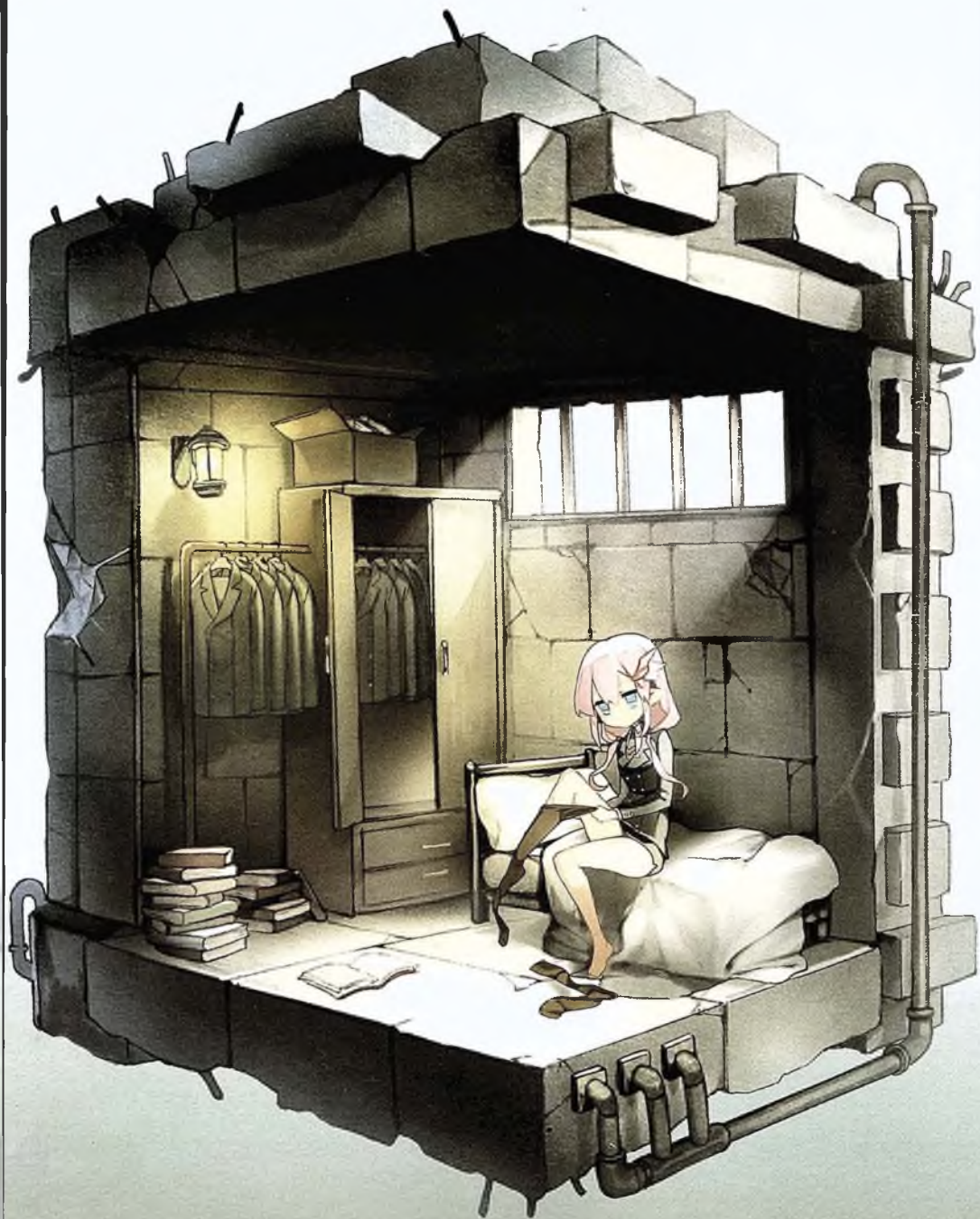
01

DUNGEON DEFENSE

무장한 자들 · COCCOPID 캐릭터들



영상출판
미디어(주)





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01

유헌화 지음 · cocorip 일러스트

Author: Yoo Heonhwa

Illustration: cocorip

Doth thou know how the world endeth?

이 세계의 결말을 알고 있습니까?

Yes

예

No

아니오

序
文

P
R
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L
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E

“Does thou believe in divination?”

“My apologies, your highness. This maiden does not believe in superstitions.”

“What a shame. Superstitions are quite grand. They give invigoration to one’s life.”

The surrounding was silent.

The crowd of five thousand silently listened to the conversation between the two people before them.

On one side stood a radiantly beautiful woman. While she was a noble who governed this city, she was also the one to have been defeated in this siege.

On the other side sat a dark man. Wrapped in a black cloak and dressed up in similarly black clothing, he

could only be described as a person of darkness.

Peculiarly, he was plucking the petals of a flower. Petal by petal, the rose was plucked apart and fell to the floor with an ominous feeling.

“Thou had the opportunity to surrender before.”

“I admit this.”

“Four times.”

The man spoke.

“I had dispatched an envoy presenting thee the opportunity to surrender, four times. However, each time, thou had slit the throat of the envoy and sent back the corpse. Seeing how it has already come to this, let us speak truthfully. I desire to behead thy beautiful head and display it on a spear.”

The man muttered nonchalantly. If you were listening from an outside perspective, the way he spoke that last sentence was like as if he was simply commenting about how nice the weather was.

In spite of that, if you were to look even slightly to the side you would learn how wrong that feeling was. From goblins to orcs and to finally ogres, these bulky monsters were guarding the man without leaving even a single gap. These monsters could slaughter the five thousand humans gathered here immediately if the man

so ordered them to.

‘...For such a normal looking man to give off such intimidating force.’

The noble woman could only gulp. The responsibility to protect the lives of the citizens were resting on her shoulders.

‘To want to put my neck on a spear. Is he speaking the truth or is he threatening me? Or perhaps he’s simply testing me...’

Christiane Louise Von Volfusbrook.

A heroine known as the ‘Northern Pearl’ of the Empire.

She had started a rebellion in the demon lord’s army. It had been about half a year since the Empire was invaded by the demons and there were humans that had still not completely accepted being ruled by monsters. It was thought that there was a considerably high chance of succeeding this revolution.

But the man before her reacted before anyone else.

In a matter of days, contact between other cities were cut, supply routes were plundered, and fortresses were captured. Once she was able to finally collect herself, her city had already fallen in only four months.

‘So this is a Demon Lord...’

Christiane Louise bit her lips strongly.

만마(萬魔)를 호령하는 일흔두 좌의 일월.

A member in an order of 72, who rules over all demons.

거짓된 연금술과 모든 수사학을 관장하는 주인.

The lord managing false alchemy and all rhetoric.

연극배우 중의 연극배우.

Actor among actors.

가로되 이면(異面)의 마왕이라 칭송받는 자.

Praised as a Demon Lord of many faces.

Dantalian.

Demon Lord Dantalian.

That was this man's name.

Christiane Louise shuddered in terror.

‘One wrong move and I’ll be killed…!’

In order to calm her shaking knees, Christiane Louise thought of her father's dying words. ‘Always be dignified’. That was right. Now was the time to behave like a noble and respond resolutely.

‘I could sell my body if necessary.’

The rumor that the demon lord in front of her was a sex fiend was already wide-spread.

Although she wasn't trying to brag, Christiane Louise was quite confident in her own appearance.

If need be, she'd become a sex slave if it meant to protect her family('s name).

Christiane Louise had made up her mind.

"Oh great Demon Lord——"

"Sorry, but could you not call me that?"

The man cut her off, showing clear detest.

"What do you mean by, 'Oh great Demon Lord'. I feel so nauseous just hearing those words, that I wouldn't be surprised if my ears were to melt off this very instant. There's over fifty Demon Lords roaming this continent alone. I wonder if I'm the only 'great Demon Lord'."

"Then, what should this one call your highness by...?"

"Just stick with 'your highness'."

Christiane Louise nodded in response.

"Yes, your highness. May I humbly inform your highness that there are three reasons to spare this one's life?"

"Is that so? Tell me only one."

The man plucked a petal and let the single red petal descend slowly.

"I do not have that much patience."

“.....!”

A chill went down Christiane Louise’s spine. The man was not even looking at her, and yet it felt as if hundreds of invisible floating eyes were staring down at her.

‘I–I must be hallucinating.’

The inside of Christiane Louise’s mouth became dry.

‘It’s nothing more than my mind playing tricks on me.’

She muttered in her mind the wise saying passed down the generations of her household.

‘Oh ancestors. Do not respect injustice because of growth, and do not ignore justice because of youth.’

Like a traveler walking down a dark mountain path whilst relying on a poorly made torch, Christiane Louise was just barely able to muster up the courage to open her mouth by depending on the pride of her family.

“...There are six cities remaining that are still supporting the rebellion. It is obvious that it’ll take an immense amount of time and manpower to conquer them all.”

The man raised his shoulders.

“Indeed. I’ve been getting the urge to commit suicide just thinking about that.”

“Your highness. Gain control of them not with spears

but with generosity. If your highness shows tolerance and forgives us here, those other cities will naturally submit on their own. However, if your highness treats us with cruelty...

"In fear of being treated the same, they'll rebel more violently."

The man cuts her off.

"Is that what you mean to say?"

"Yes, your highness."

As expected, he understood quickly.

Christiane Louise could see a small glimpse of hope.

The man in front of her wasn't simply a tyrannical Demon Lord. He was one of the more knowledgeable type. In short, words got through to him. The chance to stay alive might not be a hope in vain after all.

Christiane Louise settled her fears.

The silence continued.

After plucking a rose bare the man picked up another. Without saying a single word, he tore the entire flower off the stem. The red petals scattered like snow, falling slowly into a pile at the man's feet.

"—strip."

A single word settled down over the surrounding.

It was an incredibly normal tone. Christiane Louise

could not understand the situation. She could only blink in surprise.

“Pardon?”

“Baroness Von Volfusbrook. Thou had started a rebellion on thou own stubbornness. As a result, two thousand citizens lost their lives. Of course, they were not my people. Be it two thousand or twenty thousand, it is not of my concern. But…….”

The man raised his head slowly.

Christiane could see the man’s eyes for the first time.

It was as if pure black pupils were piercing into the deepest depths of her heart.



“...not thou. All two thousand who had perished were thy people. In all of the continent, the only one who can take responsibility for all these lives is thee.”

The man sighed.

“A few minutes ago thou appealed to me to spare thy own life. Thou was not supposed to do that. Not for thy own life, but for the lives of all the people over there. Thou was supposed to plea to spare the lives of thy people. That is how a person takes responsibility.”

“Y-Your highness. This one was…….”

“Baroness Christiane Louise Von Volfusbrook. Thou are a kind and beautiful woman. To be more precise, a devilish person. I sentence thee a disgraceful death.”

The man stood from his seat.

At once all of the monsters that were surrounding the area raised their weapons. The citizens became struck by fear and broke out into screams.

Upon these people the Demon Lord's grave verdict fell.

“Thou shall be stripped and humiliated by my soldiers. In front of all these civilians, at that. I, Dantalian, rank 71st and possessing the name of different faces이면(異面), shall hereby sentence; Christiane Louise shall be deprived of her title as a noble and face death as a mere commoner.”

“Your highness……!?”

“Many lives shall come to an end here. Despair as I place the name of the one who pointlessly wasted the lives of others at the very bottom of my heart.”

The man left the stage indifferently.

The sudden movement of the man’s cloak caused a small gust on the floor, forcing the rose petals that had finally settled down to be scattered by the wind. From behind, Christiane Louise continued to shout. “Your highness!”, however, the man never turned back.

This day, the woman known as the ‘Northern Pearl’ was executed.

Once again, the continent had to repeat the name of the Demon Lord, Dantalian.

□ *Demon Lord of Different Faces, Rank 71st, Dantalian*

How did it become like this.

Damn it. This was not how I planned it!

Christiane Louise appeared as a heroine in the game as well. Her role was to assist the protagonist, who was the hero, in political affairs. The ending where you are able to overcome the social gap between each other and finally score in marrying Christiane was considerably loved by fans. Obviously, I was one of those fans.

If possible, I wanted to spare her.

Seeing her in real life, she was much prettier than her illustrations in the game.

My god. It was as if a goddess had descended from the Heavens.

In concern of being affected by her beauty, I had kept my head down. The only reason I continued to pluck roses was to hide my trembling emotions as well…….

【1. Execute】

【2. Spare】

As per usual, whenever an important decision approached a choice box would rise up. A transparent box visible to only my eyes. Of course, I tried to select choice number 2 to spare them.

But as the conversation progressed, the mood got stranger and stranger.

Even if you're being shameless, how can one have this little shame.

Two thousand people had died. Two thousand. Despite the fact that a strange choice box would appear and a stat window shined in front of my eyes, this was nonetheless the cruel reality. In this reality, two thousand people died because of one person's ambition.

There wasn't even a slightest bit of guilt in Christiane Louise's attitude.

My mood started to get cold. The excitement I felt when I first met in person the heroine that I've only seen

through the computer monitor until now, quickly subsided. Once I came to —I found myself ordering for the most disgraceful execution.

I did it again.

I let out a small sigh and spoke to a subordinate.

“Return to the grounds and behead the prisoners.”

“Yes? Should we not make them suffer more?”

“That’s enough. This is enough of an example for the other cities.”

The subordinate received the order and walked back to the grounds.

Shortly after.

【1. Execute】

【2. Spare】

The writings shined brightly in mid-air.

The words then broke apart into white particles and drifted. Although it felt they would disappear in any second, the particles abruptly moved together to form new words.

【A cruel and merciless decision!】

【The continent is frightened by your ruthlessness.】

【Infamy increased substantially.】

Then the words dispersed like petals.

The information that my infamy rose again put me further into depression.

“How did it turn out like this.”

I could only ask myself.

This wasn’t it.

Main point, I wanted to live a quiet life.

Where did things go wrong. Surely my birth itself wasn’t a mistake, right? Is that it? Life was irrational from the very start…….

Aah, I wanted to rub(boobiboobi) against Christiane.

Not only Christiane, but I wanted to enjoy a fun life with the other heroines like Romei or the Emperor’s daughter, Elizabeth.

Truth be told, I don’t want to work at all.

Seriously, why did I have to end up possessing a Demon Lord’s body.

Anyone is okay. Please, someone fix my broken life…….

Or at least give me a one month vacation……!

第 1 話

2 年 前

2 Y E A R S

A G O

Speaking straightforward, my life was already over.

If there was one thing to talk about in this life that had already ended, then that would be my father. My father was truly a trash like man.

There was a time where my father got drunk and harassed a girl. A female high school student at that. Even though I was dumbfounded, since it was my father, I knew that it was more than likely to happen.

“If you had to sexually harass someone, did you have to choose a female high schooler?”

“Girls these days sure are developing quite splendidly.”

That was the response I got when I went to meet him. Let me correct myself.

My father wasn't just trash, but food waste.

"That girl is younger than me by 5 years."

"Only by 5 years? Are you perhaps still in college?"

My father narrowed his brows.

His expression was incredibly serious.

"I thought you were about 41 years old."

"If you look at me properly you'd know that I have a childlike face."

"Bahaha! Don't make me laugh. You've had a mustache since you were just an infant."

If only killing intent could actually kill.

My father's expression shifted and gave me a worried glance.

"Is your mother really upset?"

"Which mother?"

I gave him a slight temper.

"There are at least 4 people I can call mother. I'm not really sure which one you're referring to."

"I'm talking about **your** mother."

I let out a sigh.

I'll say this now.

Harem is a crime.

It wasn't enough to make a bunch of lovers, but to also have a child here and there as well, that was

inexcusably the worst.

The person concerned may be fine.

But in the position of the child, I wanted to kill myself.

Even after the age of forty, the mothers continued the bloody competition and feud over my father. My father was constantly indecisive and never made a choice.

As a result, the ones to come to harm were the children. The only ones dying in the struggle between mothers were innocent little us.

‘If you were smarter then wouldn’t your father pay more attention to me! You have to get first place in your whole school no matter what!’

Do you understand how it feels to hear this kind of thing every single day. Circumstances for me were a bit better though since I was male. My little sisters were really pitiful. In order to gain even a little bit more affection, they had to flatter him each and every time they could.

In the position of myself who had to watch all this happen, my impression of my own father was the worst. The chances of something good about my father coming out of my own mouth would be asking for the impossible.

“Listen carefully. I’m going to tell you slowly and exactly what you should do from here on out. Nothing bad has come from listening to my advice before, right?”

“Naturally. I’m ready to listen carefully to whatever you have to say.”

“Then first, do your best to try to stay in prison for as long as possible and **not** come out.”

“Mm.”

My father furrowed his brows.

“That’s a bit different direction of advice I was hoping for.”

“Do not come out of prison and just stay there forever. Until you die. If the word ‘dismissal’ starts to float around or something, do not latch onto it. End your regret filled life in a cell.”

“I’ve never doubted that my son was dutiful up until now, but I’m starting to have my suspicions. Son. Is that really the best option?”

“My mother is trying to kill you.”

Silence.

My father tilted his head.

“Are you saying that she’s angry enough to might kill me?”

“No. I mean exactly what I said. She is trying to kill

you.”

“Korean is quite hard—. It’s difficult to understand—.”

“According to the Standard Korean Language Dictionary made by the National Language Department, the verb ‘kill’ has eleven meanings. Amongst those I’m using the first meaning; my mother is really trying to kill you.”

“Can I ask what the definition for the first meaning is?”

“To cease or end another one’s life.”

“It was a life without any hopes or dreams…….”

My father pressed his head into his hands.

He had finally grasped the seriousness of the situation.

“You’ve been calling my mother by some weird word like ‘tsundere’ for a long time now, but I’ll tell you this now. My mother is a ‘yandere’. Resent yourself for marrying someone you most shouldn’t have while also having multiple wives.”

“But when she looked at me with those bloodthirsty eyes my body would tingle……. That’s your mother’s charm!”

“Be great if you just died already.”

I muttered unintentionally.

I do not believe in God. There’s only one reason for

that. If God really existed then the man in front of me would have been smited long time ago. My father was a Satanic person, an infectious germ that turned the people around him into atheists. I called it the ‘Human Trash Virus’.

“I didn’t know she was a high schooler in the first place. No, I groped that person’s butt not even knowing it was female. It’s unfair.”

“Then you lifted that skirt thinking it was a man? Congratulations. It’s fortunate that you were finally able to discover your actual sexual preference at that late of age. If you had realized 25 years sooner then the world could have been more peaceful, families could have been more tranquil, and my life could have been smoother.”

“I had 7 bottles of soju so I wasn’t sane.”

“Are you ever sane?”

I stood up from the seat.

I spoke while sullenly looking down at my father.

“Never bring up alcohol while in court. If they put that into consideration then your sentence will most likely be shortened. The day you leave prison, my mother will be waiting for you with a knife.”

“My beloved son…….”

“Yes? Go ahead and speak, my not beloved father.”

“You must make good choices in life.”

I snorted.

“When you’re the one saying that, that sounds incredibly persuasive.”

“Right?”

“I’ll come visit whenever I have the time so make sure to behave.”

No matter who saw, my father was a failure of a husband.

There was no room for sympathy.

However, he was not a failure as a parent. Starting from me, my 6 siblings and I all were able to live wealthy lives. This was an incredible achievement. Also, while a person lives their life, be it as a husband or a parent, as long as they are successful in even one category I think they’re admirable. This way of thought still has not changed.

Stay in prison forever.

My father gladly listened to my last advice.

In the end, it became so.

Four days later, my father had passed away because of a heart attack.



“I’m completely exhausted…….”

After sorting out my boxes and furniture, I lied on my bed.

For the last month I had faced Hell. This was not a joke. If a demon could have seen my unsightly and miserable figure, then even they would have felt so much sympathy for me that they’d end up ascending as an angel.

I folded my fingers down one by one.

“The funeral is over. Set all the real estate in order. Passed over the foundation…….”

I roughly threw away everything I needed to throw away from life.

Give up on the inheritance.

As soon as my father passed away I had dropped this bombshell.

My mother fainted and my half siblings made a commotion. My second half little sister was especially terrible. She clung onto me until my pants tore. However, my will was as firm as the snow piled at the very top of the Himalaya Mountains. If you want to break my stubbornness then you need to forward global warming by 600 years. Unfortunately, my mothers and

siblings did not have the capability to immediately raise the carbon dioxide exhaust quantity around the world by seventy times the current amount at that time.

‘If brother retires, we’ll all be ruined!’

‘Big brother is a stupid idiot!’

‘I’m never contacting you again!’

Finally, once my second half little sister gave up, I escaped.

Phew.

A smile of satisfaction floated on my face.

To live the rest of one’s life is to live free from worldly cares. There’s no point in pretending to be something you’re not and buying things like a high noble. I’m too busy to go crazy and spend money on everything. While a few of my siblings were pleased that they had become the head of a company at such a young age, my second half little sister followed up with the statement—— ‘Even if we end up ripping his(brother’s) ear off, we can’t let him go! Our household will be ruined within 6 years without him!’, ——which I felt strongly for because I knew she was right.

“Okay. I’ve dealt with everything. I’m truly free now……!”

Thank you, father.

For passing away at an appropriate time.

This honest feeling may be an incredibly undutiful and immoral statement to say to one's parent and it shakes my conscience by 1 mg, but if you consider the large amount of crap that my father had left behind on my life, the already little amount of conscience that remained seems to have vanished on its own.

I will never forget the moment he used his own son as a shield in order to avoid the knife being swung by my mother (a painful mid-summer memory from my second year of elementary school), even if I die.

All things considered, I've already won the game of life.

Currently, in my bank account, was the large sum of over five hundred million won¹⁾.

Just because I gave up on the inheritance doesn't mean I didn't fill my back pockets. I can enjoy the remainder of my life without having to ever work.

Yup.

Not the entirety of my life, but what remains.

I do not mean the definition to keep on living, but simply the meaning of what's left. I purely desired for

1) TL note: about 425,000\$

only this.

I got up from my bed and with a brush I wrote in large writing on a piece of parchment.

For the next 50 years, this will be the terms that'll lead me for the remainder of my life.

┌

┐

1. Do not work.

2. Do not make friends.

3. Do not get married.

└

┘

“.....Beautiful.”

I was moved by my own writing.

I wonder if when Pythagoras discovered the law of mathematics, he was as deeply touched as I am now.

First, do not work.

This was stupidly obvious.

I've heard that there are some people in the world who enjoyed fruits of labor in their life. Thankfully, I'm not one of those perverted masochist.

Second, do not make friends.

This was also obvious.

There are only backstabbers and potential backstabbers

in the world. Friendship is merely a vain dream, a virtual image, a fantasy. I won't take any counterarguments.

Third, do not get married.

—This was important.

My father had relations with five women. After having watched a live romance drama starring 6 people since I was a mere child, I've come to a grave and serious conclusion.

Marriage is an insane act.

Something like true love are all bull crap lies.

Love is merely a **way of murder** that has become surprisingly gentler. As a result, it's possessive desire and sexual desire.

Of course, grown up members of society might have a different opinion than I. That's okay. Be satisfied with your bright and beautiful marriage life. However, if maybe, just maybe, you end up separating from your partner…… compared to your marriage life, **so much more** beautiful days will lie ahead of you. I'll guarantee it. You have my word. For starters, the dangers of being stabbed by a knife disappears. This alone already seems like a huge benefit, don't you think?

Yes.

I'm a pessimistic human.

I wasn't like this from the very beginning. Believe me. Originally, I was highly positive. The world was beautiful and the righteousness in my chest flopped around like a just caught mackerel. To be specific, I was like this until a month ago. However, after having witnessed my mothers do a 1:1:1:1 deathmatch in the middle of the **funeral**, I politely recycled my hopes and dreams into the trash.

That's so. This world is tragic. Even if you're vexed, what can you do. This is the truth. The carbon dioxide exhaust rate won't go down, China will grasp capital over the entire world, Justin Bieber will receive the Nobel Prize in literature……, and in 122 years you'll be dead, I'll be dead, we'll all be dead.

Oh, I'll also tell you just in case; that adorable pet of yours will get hit by the front wheel of a bicycle and die…… I'm sorry to tell you the news, but what can you do? This is the truth.

If you're done being sad then drink a beer.

To start off my carefree life, I went to the convenience store and bought 60 cans of beer.

The part-timer at the convenience store gave me a look as if asking 'Excuse me, it's not of my concern but is your life okay like this?'. I thanked the girl's deep

consideration and coolly swiped my card.

So what.

My card has damn five hundred million won. Five hundred million won is strong!

Take that! If you have a problem then come at me!

‘Son’

‘Whatever you choose’

‘Whatever you choose, ………tter than me——’

I wonder if it was because of the beer.

I recalled something unpleasant.

A kind of trauma.

I opened a second can of beer and muttered.

“I succeeded in running away, father.”

Those were my last words to my father.

I stayed in the corner of my home and didn’t come out.

Goodbye, labor.

Goodbye, world.

I’ll be going to the world across the monitor.

Adieu.



——Two months passed in a blink of an eye.

I've conquered the computer games I couldn't enjoy for the past 4 years.

"This is life……."

I was silently moved to tears.

I've been only consuming convenience store packed lunches, so my current figure was getting close to the border of that of a homosapien gorilla.

Trash was littered on all four sides of me.

The desk with my monitor on top was especially impressive.

The Empire of Empty Cup Ramens and the Republic of Empty Beer Cans were conquering the desk—continent, and having their own world war while drawing all kinds of geometrical national borders. In this world I'm what you'd call an absolute God. If it's unfavorable for the Empire then I'd add a cup ramen. If it's unfavorable for the Republic then I'd add a beer can. It wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that it was thanks to me that balance was able to be kept in this continent…….

At that moment a notification popped up on my monitor.

—*Tirring*

An email arrived.

Moving my mouse over, I clicked to check it.

Thank you for enjoying our company's game, <Dungeon Attack>. In order to improve for the next expansion, we are doing a survey. Participants will be able to gain the chance to be a beta tester for the next installment!

It was a normal email.

My email address was probably subscribed when I bought the game.

Right when I was about to delete the mail, I hesitated.

“Next expansion, huh?”

A standard dungeon-capturing RPG, <Dungeon Attack>.

It was one of the games that I enjoyed during the two months.

Become a hero and defeat the Demon Lords.

The difficulty was a bit strange, so it was incredibly challenging. First run, I could barely defeat the mid-boss. Second run, third run, and finally on the sixteenth run, after tedious grinding, I was narrowly able to win against the final boss.

There's no business in grinding.

My hero character got stronger after each run.

In the NPC's perspective, I probably seemed like a fraud and a cheat, but what can you do? Life was irrational from the very start.

Some starts life with high stats while other's don't.

—*Click*

I accepted the survey with a click of my mouse. It'll probably ask me questions like: was the difficulty reasonable, was there any inconvenience with the interface, boring questions like that. Regardless, I was able to spend an enjoyable amount of time on <Dungeon Attack>. I'll play along.

A new page opened up on my monitor screen.

【1. In the end, I prefer small girls!】

【2. In the end, I prefer mature women!】

“.....”

A completely unpredictable Mr. Question has appeared. I grasped onto my mind that went blank for a moment.

What is this, a small joke? Are proper questions going to come out after this?

After thinking for a moment, I chose number 2. If you were someone with common sense then it was only

appropriate to select number 2. Everyone, lolita complex is a mental illness.

On the white screen, the second question appeared.

【1. In the end, I get excited when I get hit by someone···!】

【2. In the end, I get excited when I hit someone···!】

“What kind of survey is this!?”

I shouted at the monitor.

The periods+exclamation mark at the end of the sentence made it feel pointlessly vivid. It looked as if you were confessing your secret sexual desires, doesn't it·····!

I glared at the monitor with a disgusted look.

For now, I selected number 2. To be hit or to hit. If I had to choose between the two, then I could only choose the latter. I've heard that there was a group of people in the world who felt pleasure from pain, but thank the heavens, I'm not a pervert.

【1. I prefer a low difficulty.】

【2. I prefer a high difficulty.】

After that, I got normal quality questions.

They most likely placed the weird questions in the

front to gain the surveyee's attention.

To compliment them for being smart, or to complain that they put too much thought into this survey.

【1. I solve my problems with strength.】

【2. I solve my problems with knowledge.】

Without any hesitation I chose number 2.

I stopped trying to solve my problems through force since the time I got beat up by the girl sitting next to me in kindergarten. People called humans like me a 'refined pacifist'.

【1. I gain benefit from keeping other people's secrets.】

【2. I gain pleasure from using other people's secrets.】

Once again, with no hesitation, I chose number two.

During kindergarten, once I obtained the information that the girl sitting next to me wet her bed every morning, I took advantage of it as much as possible. After having done so, I learned the greatness of information. Diplomatic studies call this kind of politics 'armed neutrality'.

【1. Friendship means to go forward together towards the same goal.】

【2. Friendship means a friend who hasn't betrayed you yet.】

Ooh. I don't know who it was, but they need to give a round of applause to the staff who made option number two.

Now that I think about it, I've been only choosing the second option. It must mean that number 1 points to abnormal and number 2 points to normal.

I think about thirty questions had passed.

A question with a different format was displayed for the first time.

【Do you know how this world ends?】

【Yes】

【No】

I stopped my mouse.

.....It was a question purposely made abstract.

It was a sentence that only players who very faithfully played the game could understand.

Dungeon Attack.

The hero subjugates the Demon Lords.

A simple structure.

However…… in the end, the world probably arrives at destruction. The reason why the word ‘probably’ was included was simple. The game did not kindly tell you what happened to the world after the ending. This was merely the conclusion I came to on my own while going through the campaign.

In <Dungeon Attack>, Demon Lords are owners of magical energy, people with a massive amount of magical energy condensed into them. What happens if all these people are killed off.

The magical energy will overflow.

Like as if many reservoirs collapse at the same time and cause a flood.

The hero killed off the Demon Lords in order to protect mankind and as a result the balance of magical energy collapsed, then, contrary to what was intended, the end of mankind and the destruction of the world…….

This was what I thought to be the ‘true ending’ of the game.

Thank you very much, protagonist.

Thank you very much, player.

Yet, we must apologize, that due to your efforts the

world was destroyed.

No hopes or dreams.

That's why I liked it.

A pessimistic world outlook…… it suited my taste.

I spoke the words 'yes', and clicked my mouse.

As if it was calculating something, it took some time before the next question appeared.

The sentence to appear on screen was abstract again.

【If it were you, could you change the ending?】

I wonder.

To protect mankind and to also not slaughter demons.

In other words, to bring peace between the two races.

According to the setting, humans and demons have been going at each other for nearly 3,000 years. It'd probably be easier to make the leader of Islamic extremists reconcile with the president of the United States of America.

Would I be able to do such a thing…….

I started thinking.

Then thought some more.

And….

[Yes]

The sound of a click rang, and at the same time.

“.....!”

A bright white light shined from my monitor screen.

This was the last scenery I could remember.

A bell chimed somewhere. No, it could have been the sound of an explosion. The feeling of the world around me being flipped—— as if my skull was being expanded on all four sides.

My hearing went numb and everything felt distant.

My vision kept blinking.

I couldn't move my eyelids on my own accord.

As if someone else was opening and closing my eyes for me.

My conscience stopped.

Then.

Then.....

【The tutorial shall now begin.】

【Difficulty set to LUNATIC (Highest possible setting).】

【START】

Then I opened my eyes.

第 2 話

무대에
오른
악마

A Devil Steps on Stage

The ceiling broke and fell.

A large rock landed right in front of my face.

“What……!”

I quickly gained my senses.

Instinctively, I took a step back, however, with a thud, my back bumped against something. It was a wall.

Carefully looking around myself, I realized I was in a pitch black cavern.

I had gone to see a stalactite cave before during a school trip before. From what I could see, the ceiling now was 2–3 times higher than that cave. It was so high up that I could just barely see the top. I couldn’t possibly imagine how faraway the dark mouth of the

cave was.

“.....”

I killed my breath.

Why was I here?

How did I get here?

A loud siren rang in my head. My conscience instantly went cold. Whenever I found myself in an unpredicted situation my head would cool down in order to compose myself.

It was because of the trauma I had experienced when I was young.

I had been kidnapped three times in my life. The memory from those times forced open my skull and poured in ice-cold water, as if telling me to stay on my toes.

‘Do not scream’, that’ll only irritate the kidnappers.

‘Talk to yourself quietly’, you can confirm your situation this way.

Behavior procedures prepared like a manual.

Like a special forces unit listening to orders while facing terrorists, my conscience more than gladly followed the guidelines carved into my memory.

“.....I was sitting in my room a moment ago..... and using the computer. It was 7PM. Drank 2 cans of beer.

For dinner I had cup ramen…….”

Little by little, my breathing became calmer.

There was no problem with my memory.

It at least meant that this wasn't a drug induced kidnapping.

「There were no drugs」

With just this the situation was reasonably favorable. It meant that the kidnapper had the intent to talk with me.

That's why the kidnapping when I was in my third year of elementary school was serious. The motive then was to plainly obtain my body. I had to unconditionally keep my mouth shut. No reason whatsoever…….

“Okay. Next…….”

I checked my senses.

In order; vision, scent, hearing, taste, and touch.

Without rushing, I had to make sure my senses were working properly.

“The location appears to be a cave. Definitely a cave. It's very dark. Doesn't seem like my vision got worse. Rock, paper, scissor…….”

I moved my fingers to make the shapes.

I could see the forms properly.

Good. My vision was fine.

The problem was scent.

“.....!”

A foul nauseating smell.

The smell of blood vibrated around me.

I wonder if it was because I had suddenly found myself in an unfamiliar environment, but I wasn't paying attention to the smell until now. Now that I've realized it, the revolting smell was so intense that it felt like it got past my nostril's and shook my very brain.

“This is.....”

It was a scent I had smelled three or four times in my life.

A scent which I never wanted to smell again. The smell of blood and intestines.

Corpses were spread throughout the cave.

There were human corpses that were swollen as if they were drowned, bodies with slit throats, and even bodies with limbs bent in the wrong direction.

“Eugh..... euuk.....”

If this cave was one of those art exhibitions, then the curator would undoubtedly be an absurdly perverted sadist. As if triumphantly displaying that humans could die in this many ways. The fact that the cave was dark was the only solace since the corpses were comparatively hard to see.

“Is this place supposed to be the mystery of the human body…… Damn it.”

I had to get out of here quickly.

I put my right foot forward and—— fell just like that.
My ankle was broken.

The entire bone was broken. It wasn't something like an adorable sprain.

“Shit.”

I unintentionally let out a curse. I had to conclude that I couldn't run or walk. The pain wasn't ordinary. If the kidnapper approached now then it was impossible to escape. Perhaps they broke my ankle on purpose. Keeping safety measures. This was probably why they didn't use drugs.

“Haa.”

I sat down in defeat.

I was regretfully checkmated.

Why did they kidnap someone like me, I couldn't understand.

“……I left all the fortune to my siblings. If it was two months ago then maybe, but there's no point of kidnapping me right now.”

Surely they don't mean to take me as hostage and threaten my siblings.

Foolish. I don't know about someone else, but the person currently leading our household was my second half little sister. She could manage the household with composure, although not as good as I did. You'll get hurt if you underestimate my sibling just because she's young.

“Hooo…….”

I could only sigh when thinking about who the culprit was.

There were plenty of people spread across the world who could want revenge against me. There were also surprisingly a lot of fellows who still had a grudge against my father as well, but wanted to let it out on me instead. That's why I wanted to wipe my hands clean of everything.

It was then that I heard a hurried voice coming from the other side of the cave.

“I found him!”

“The Demon Lord is here!”

Demon Lord.

It was a name that had absolutely no connections with me.

For some reason the voice was directed towards where I was. I'm confused. I had been called a devil a

considerable amount of times in my life, but this was the first time I had been called a Demon Lord. It might be a type of secret code.

“Stay right there!”

“We’ll kill you if you move!”

The people came in like wolves.

The men were holding edged weapons like knives and axes. There’s no way I couldn’t be bewildered by this. I shot up both my arms.

“I surrender!”

“Get down you bastard!”

Without warning, the other man grabbed my head and slammed it to the ground. They were violent with me even though I told them that I surrendered.

“Ack…….”

A rock that was lying on the ground sharply stabbed against my cheek.

“Keep your damn face down! Stay like that till we say otherwise!”

I almost let out a shout of pain, but I was able to hold it back.

Loud noises irritated kidnappers. During a kidnapping, even if you’re in pain you must not scream.

3rd year of Elementary school, I didn’t know anything

and kept on wailing. After being beat until five of my teeth were broken, I had learned to be silent.

Silently.

Politely.

It may seem stupid, but this was the proper attitude to have towards a kidnapper.

“I caught him! Riff of Jalsen, has captured the Demon Lord!”

“Ooh. Our great and handsome captain, Riff. You aren’t planning to take all the bounty on your own, are you?”

The men started chatting in excitement.

I held my breath and listened to their conversation.

“Of course not. I’ll share with everyone equally. Keke.”

“Look at this. This Demon Lord looks just like a caterpillar.”

“Looks good with his head on the ground. Let’s kill him already.”

“What do you mean, kill him? There are things we still haven’t asked him yet.”

Someone kicked my side.

It wasn’t a genuine hit but more done jokingly, regardless that alone was pretty painful.

“—but just in case, we should break him.”

“Friends! Let us beat the Demon Lord into a reasonably sized pulp.”

Merciless violence showered down upon me.

Ten people were kicking me. I desperately held back my screams. More than 5 minutes had passed before the kicking started to subside.

“Good good. That’s enough.”

“Guys. Our handsome boss said to stop.”

“Keke.”

The violence finally stopped.

While I was breathing roughly, one of the men spoke to me as a representative.

“Well now, honorable Demon Lord. There’s one thing that we wish to ask you. Where’s all the money in this castle. To tell you the truth, us village folk are in real need of money.”

As expected, I was kidnapped for money.

Wait, but they’ve been keep using words that I’m not familiar with. This was something that I had to confirm. There was a chance that they were mistaking me for someone else.

“What do you mean by ‘Demon Lord’……?”

When I opened my mouth, I let out a groan. My lips were torn.

“Good. Very good.”

The man insinuated.

“Despite being hit so much, you’re still able to display such a nature. An excellent stance. Keke. I don’t hate that kind of thing, your honorable Demon Lord.”

With a rough hand the man grabbed my hair.

“Ack…….”

I was forced to raise my face.

I made eye contact with the man in front of me.

The man had bent his body forward and was looking down at me. His entire face was covered in a brown beard. A darkish mushroom that grew in a public bathroom that hadn’t been cleaned for over 5 years, that was what his beard looked like. In simpler words, frighteningly dirty.

“But my friends here don’t have as much patience as me.”

“……What can I help you with?”

“Your honor. We don’t desire to use pointless violence.”

That’s convincing.

“Instead of wasting each other’s energy, let us trade. Tell us where the treasury is and we will not kill your honor immediately. We won’t cut your arms or legs off.

And, of course, we won't cut your precious horn off, either. Think carefully. In truth, we're the ones at a loss in this trade."

"Yeah, at a great loss!"

They broke out into laughter.

It was laughter of people who had a rough birth.

I waited for the mood to settle before speaking again. Always courteously. Making sure to not irritate their mood.

I asked a question.

"I'm sorry, but what do you mean by horn?"

"Aah? What are you asking."

The man placed his hand on the back of my head.

"This. I'm talking about this."

The man had grabbed **something** on my head. My head that should only have hair. There, something long was **attached** all the way to my skull.

I felt the back of my head.

There was certainly something hard there.

The shape was, as the man had said, in the shape of a horn.

"....."

This.

What could this creation be.

I gazed forward with blank eyes.

Don't tell me.

Before I was kidnapped, no, before I lost conscience. I was responding to a game survey on my computer.

When I opened my eyes in this cavern I had heard a faint voice…… I'm certain it whispered 'The tutorial shall now begin'. I ignored it because I thought it was some nonsense from my dream.

The man had called me Demon Lord. There was something like a horn actually attached to the back of my head…….

Game. Tutorial. Demon Lord.

These three words pointed at one possibility.

Fortunately or unfortunately, my mind quickly came to a conclusion.

"Now. Your honor, Demon Lord Dantalian. We'll ask you only one more time."

I couldn't accept the answer.

The common sense, experience, and knowledge I had gained throughout my entire life completely denied the conclusion. However, as if laughing at my escape from reality, an alarm rang.

—*Tirring*

White words appeared in mid-air.

【1. Accept adventurer captain Riff's offer.】

【2. Decline adventurer captain Riff's offer.】

“.....”

I was at a lost for words.

Undeniable proof had presented itself right before me.

“Will you accept our offer? Or will you just die here.

Wow. You can't get choices as clean as this. Keke.

Hurry and pick, oh honorable Demon Lord.”

The man gave an ill-tempered laugh. It was certain that the man couldn't see the floating words.

Is it like that

Is it like that

.....Is it like that.

My monologue continued and echoed in my drifting away conscience.

Like an actor who forgot his lines on stage and kept repeating his last spoken line.

I bit my lips. The taste of blood spread throughout my mouth. The vividly raw taste brought my conscience back to reality. In front of me was a barbaric man with a broad grin on his face.

Willing or not——.

I'm a Demon Lord in the world of <Dungeon Attack>.

My head went cold.

As if time was flowing slowly.

“Mr. Demon Lord’s response is a bit slow.”

I gazed at the man who had just spoke.

It wasn’t only this man who had skipped shaving. The other people around us also had beards. It might be normal for these men to not shave.

‘Their outfits are old.’

‘Way too old.’

‘To be precise, I’d say about **400 years old.**’

Around the time Henry the IV of France fought lively against the Roman Catholics, perhaps. The clothes looked similar to the one’s worn by the people during the French Wars of Religion. They were outfits that should have been sent straight to the museum, but no matter how you looked at these men they didn’t look like they worked at a museum.

“Are you really planning to not answer?”

Situations that couldn’t be understood until now were starting to be explained by assumptions. For example, as if a mysterious phenomenon was finally explained by the

laws of physics.

“Oi, your honor Dantalian.”

Demon Lord Dantalian.

These people have been calling me Dantalian.

That was the name of the Demon Lord who showed up in <Dungeon Attack>.

There are a total of 72 Demon Lords who appear in that game. Amongst them, Dantalian was ranked 71st. He was that close to last place. Correspondingly, his level was also miserably low. In the first place, he was like a trash mob made for beginners.

Even a person playing computer games for the first time could beat him on the first run.

If I had to compare it with another game, then he was like a rabbit in the beginner field. As long as you knew how to click your mouse then you could defeat the rabbit. Dantalian was the same.

……I should also add.

After the first run, Dantalian doesn't appear at all in the game. He was removed in case that players got annoyed.

Imagine telling a level 20 warrior to ‘Go back to the beginner field and hunt a rabbit’. It'd be boring. Dantalian was a rabbit that you didn't feel like fighting

again.

And if I'm correct, I'm currently possessing that Dantalian.

“.....”

There was a bitter taste in my mouth.

How do I get out of the evil hands of these adventurers.

I'm currently captured by humans. If this goes on I'll probably get my head cut off or be taken to the city and executed. No matter how much I strained my brain I could only think of BAD ENDS.

Even if I proclaimed 'I'm not Dantalian!', I'd be grateful if I even got a sneer in response.

I couldn't rely on Demon Lord Dantalian's ability.

Let me rephrase that.

I could only rely on my own ability in order to overcome this obstacle.

“If you're testing my patience right now.....”

“The treasury is in Minlakdong²⁾.”

I made my resolution.

2) TL note: A *dong* (동; 洞) is a submunicipal level administrative unit of a city. It is the smallest level of urban government to have its own office and staff in South Korea.

□ *Adventurer, Cowardly Looter, Riff Hoffman*
Empire Calender: Year 1505, Month 4, Day 4
Dantalian's Demon Lord Castle

Looter Riff.

That was my nickname.

Despite being an adventurer, I didn't hunt demons, but instead, looted other adventurers. That's how I got the nickname. Well, let them call me whatever they want.

The people who honestly hunt demons are the fools, aren't they?

The ones who live skillfully in the world are the ones who benefit.

Using common sense, people who fought monsters like orcs and goblins are idiots. I'm saying this very seriously and sincerely.

To live a not sincere life and become a corpse, or to

live a sincere life and become a cowardly looter. If I had to choose between the two, then of course I'd choose the latter. Will I still choose the latter if I die and become reincarnated? I won't ever die.

Keke.

Regardless, light was finally shining down on my looter career.

Half a month ago, I obtained the map of Demon Lord Dantalian's Castle. I was lucky. There was a girl too pretty to be rotting away in some lowly village. I was going to assault her a little bit, but, while presenting me this map, she pleaded, "I'll give you this, so please spare me.". She was a girl with beautiful red hair.

Hm? Of course assaulting a virgin is wrong.

But I really like doing bad things.

I told you already.

I'm a looter.

I don't only loot the pockets of dead adventurers, but the virginity of all the young women in the world as well. Personally, I'd preferred to be called 'Virginity Looter'. Something like 'The Looter of Virginities' sounds like a cool title. It's good because it sounds romantic.

Thanks to this map, I was able to gather a bunch of random adventurers. Dantalian was one of the weakest

Demon Lords and there was most likely no monsters in the castle. As long as we knew where to find him, then it'd be easy to capture him.

We used an artifact that detected magical energy to search inside of the cavern. We wandered the dark cave for about four hours, but our efforts weren't in vain. We were able to capture the Demon Lord Dantalian.

Amazing! The map was real!

"Look at this. This Demon Lord looks just like a caterpillar."

My comrades were chuckling while holding the Demon Lord down.

"Looks good with his head on the ground. Let's kill him already."

"What do you mean, kill him!?"

I gave the person who spoke a vulgar look. You could gain a higher reward if you captured the Demon Lord alive. Also there was something we still hadn't asked him yet. Where the treasure was.

Gain whatever information we could get. That was common sense.

First things first, we beat the Demon Lord up and then asked him where the treasury was.

But this Demon Lord, his reaction was strange.

He'd suddenly stare at an empty space and he'd narrow his brows and lower his chin as if he was in deep thought. What is this? Is he an idiot? I vaguely thought Demon Lords were supposed to be ghastly tyrants, but what is this small fry.

Well, since he was a small fry someone like me could capture him. I have no complaints. I love small fries. I'd gladly decline Demon Lords like Barbatos or Paimon.

"Mr. Demon Lord's response is a bit slow. Are you really planning to not answer?"

I snickered and tapped the Demon Lord's cheek."

"Oi, your honor Dantalian."

It was then.

"....."

It was for a mere moment, but the Demon Lord had a dreadfully spine chilling gaze.

I blinked a couple of times and after doing so, the same minor small fry-looking Demon Lord was in front of me again.

Huh?

The atmosphere changed for a brief moment.

.....Was I seeing things?

Oh well. Treasure. Treasure was more important.

Let's keep pressing this Demon Lord.

□ *Weakest Demon Lord, Rank 71st, Dantalian*
Empire Calendar: Year 1505, Month 4, Day 4
Dantalian's Demon Lord Castle

“The treasury is in Minlakdong.”

The other party furrowed their eyebrows.

“Mayirock…… what?”

“Minlakdong. It's at the Minlakdong.”

I told them the location of the treasury for the second time.

Honestly, I just said the name of whatever neighborhood that came to mind.

How was I supposed to know where the treasury of the Demon Lord's castle was?

And if I sincerely answered, ‘I don't know where it is’, I'd probably get a blade flying my way. For now, I had to say whatever I could in order to gain their interest.

I had to carefully pay attention to the men's reactions.
“Millak, Mooirakkutoung…… the damn pronunciation is strange!”

“Do you not know of it? Here, I'll write it down.”
Offering to write it down, I lowered my body and wrote on the cavern floor.

I didn't have any writing utensils, but I did shed a lot of blood. Dipping my finger in my own blood, I smoothly wrote the word.

민락동 民樂洞

First line in Korean. Second line in Chinese characters.
I slightly turned my line of sight to see their reaction.
“Hey, bring the torch closer.”
“I have no idea…… were there letters like this?”
They faced each other and started talking.
“None of us here even know how to read.”
“Yeah, but the shape is completely different.”
Okay.
I generally understood the principle of the language.
I currently heard everything they said in Korean.
However, when I wrote the words, they couldn't

understand.

In conclusion, just because I heard everything in Korean didn't mean they also heard in Korean as well.

There were two possibilities.

One, the pronunciation was the same but the letters were different. Or two, both the pronunciation and letters were different but for **some reason** only I perceived everything in Korean.

Which one was the answer.

I decided to test it immediately.

"It's natural for this to be unfamiliar to you gentlemen. This is ancient demon language. In order to fully secure the treasury, I had specifically used ancient demon language to magically seal the treasure."

"Magic?"

"Yes. The vault will not open to those who do not understand the language."

The men made a commotion.

The answer was revealed by that conversation.

We were currently talking in a language completely different from Korean, in terms of both pronunciation and letters.

How do I know this? Because I had spoken in **foreign languages** just now.

First sentence in English, second sentence in German, third sentence in Chinese, and fourth sentence in Japanese. And yet, these men understood me fully.

I don't know by what principle, but the conversation was automatically being translated.

"Mr. Demon Lord. Do we, uh, need to understand that ancient demon language thing to open the vault?"

"Yes. Of course."

"Hmmm."

The man narrowed his brows.

—Right now this person was trying to kill me.

He promised to spare my life if I told him the location of the secret vault, but that was a big fat lie. You could tell someone was lying shamelessly by their face.

So accordingly, I had to give them a reason to keep me alive.

"Alright, honorable Demon Lord. I like this fair trade."

The man fell for my lie nicely.

"I think we can be good friends. So, where's this Mooirakkutoung³⁾, exactly?"

"There's a secret passage where I was originally at."

"The Demon Lord's quarters? There was nothing there when we checked."

3) TL note: These guys are pronouncing it incorrectly.

“That’s not so. In my quarters, it will only recognize me and open…… There’s a secret passage that only opens when I place my hand on it.”

“A magical device. Okay.”

The man grabbed my arm and forced me up.

A horrible pain spread from my right ankle. I couldn’t hold back my scream this time.

“Aaack!”

“Oh. Your leg is messed up.”

The man clicked his tongue.

“New guy! You support his honor, Dantalian.”

“Roger that, captain.”

A young man, who I assumed to be the new guy, came over to support me. He had a dagger attached to his belt. The adventurer group captain then shouted.

“Let’s get moving boys!”

The group of ten adventurers moved forward through the cave.

These men seemed to know where the Demon Lord’s quarter was. I was lucky since I had no idea where it could possibly be.

If they had told me to lead them to my quarters, I’d probably have died on the spot.

A bell rang with a ‘Tirring~’ sound.

【1. Accept adventurer captain Riff's offer.】

【2. Decline adventurer captain Riff's offer.】

The first choice shined brightly and then new words rose up. The choice wasn't selected because I thought of selecting it, but rather, it was selected by my actual actions.

【Overcame the crisis with cunning eloquence.】

【Warning. Actions taken during the tutorial will henceforth affect your stats.】

I got passed the crisis.

In other words, it meant that if I didn't lie to them then I really would have been in a fatal situation. The unnecessary remark sent a chill down my spine.

These people were not joking around.

To live or to die. That was the question.

I barely got past the first obstacle.

By any means, I had to stay alive.



The adventurer group continued to walk through the cavern.

“How about just killing him now…….”

“Yeah. We aren’t some group of thieves. Instead of wasting time searching for a hidden vault, we could end it here neatly…….”

“I don’t know about you guys, but I agree with the captain. Nothing bad about getting a bit more money…….”

I could hear the adventurers talking up ahead.

I don’t care if you’re going to discuss whether I live or die, but could you at least speak in a voice that I couldn’t hear. It’s not that hard.

They have no manners.

“Hey. Even if his leg is sprained, isn’t he a bit too slow?”

“Like I said. He’s probably stalling.”

They went as far as to flat out make sarcastic remarks.

The level of these adventurers that had captured me weren’t very good.

They radiated poorness. The blade of their weapons were jagged. It was proof that they didn’t properly maintain their gear. In the game’s standard, they’d be ranked F. The lowest adventurer group. They were

around that level.

They'd get wiped by around 20 goblins.

...Although, not being able to put under command those goblins that are spread almost everywhere, was Demon Lord Dantalian's level.

"Your honor, Demon Lord. My comrades are a bit impatient."

The man called Riff, informed me with a snicker.

I lowered my head.

"I apologize. I'll try harder to walk faster."

"A nice and fast response. That's good."

He was talking to me like I was inferior.

I had now decided. I will definitely destroy that proud face of his. I'll drag this man's face in the mud.

I won't go easy on him even if he begs for mercy later. Look forward to it, Riff.

"Us adventurers have an occupational disease. It seems they're suspicious that your honor is trying to trick us. That you're stalling for time to do something to us."

"That's impossible."

I immediately replied.

There was no gain from telling them the truth.

Now, time to start the performance.

"I used to have subordinates as well. Goblins, imps,

orcs…… nothing special, but they were still my precious subordinates. However, before you gentlemen, groups of adventurers had assaulted this castle three times in a row.”

The edge of my eye became wet.

I had the ability to cry on command. It required a little trick. It was a special move that my little sisters had taught me.

“You gentlemen are the fourth to arrive at my castle. My subordinates are all already dead. Even the little ones that have been with me for over 30 years. All of them…….”

“H–Huh?”

Riff panicked.

“Surely, your honor, you aren’t crying now, are you?”

“N–No. Cry? I would never.”

I spoke like a child who was desperately trying to hold back his tears.

“It’s just that amongst them, there was a nanny who had taken care of me since I was a mere infant. Yes. She looked like an orc. That’s because she was an orc. But she took care of me sincerely. I even called her ‘mother’. A week ago, she was pierced in the chest with a spear by an adventurer and died…….”

Pitiful crying echoed throughout the cave.

“Well. That, what should I say. That’s quite unfortunate. You have my condolences.”

“She held me until the very end. Even after being stabbed, even after shedding so much blood, she continued to hold me tightly to protect me from the falling arrows. Everyone, I can not forget the emotions I went through during that time no matter how hard I try…….”

“…….”

“She had wrapped both of her arms around me. I couldn’t see a thing, but with a thud, her body shook. Thud thud, her body kept shaking. I didn’t know what was happening at first, however, I soon found out that it was because of the arrows. Each time an arrow fell, her body would shudder. Despite that…….”

Let a tear fall here once.

My act was about to reach its climax.

“Despite all that, she was looking down at me and smiling! Yes, she smiled till the very end. I wasn’t sane. I thought I was going crazy. The most precious person in the world to me was dying in front of my very eyes…… dying to protect me, she was even smiling……. What was I supposed to say!?”

I covered my face with my hands.

Weak crying leaked from between my fingers.

"I asked if it hurt. If she was in pain, but do you know what she told me in response?"

"....."

"‘I’m alright, young master’."

The air was dead silent.

The adventurers had been captivated by my story at some point and were now quiet.

My father had trained me to be an actor since I was a child.

I went through a test at one point. Go to any cafe and talk on the phone.

In truth, no sound came from the phone, but I pretended to argue with my girlfriend.

‘I’m sorry. I’m sorry for everything.’

‘I’ll do better from now on.’

Improvised acting.

At first, the reaction from the other cafe customers was annoyance.

They were simply relaxing in a cafe and then suddenly some high school student appeared and started talking loudly on his phone. Regardless, as time past, their expressions slowly shifted. Their emotions changed.

It was sympathy.

They had experience the same thing before. They had pleaded to a loved one at a point in their life. Feeling empathy, they finally started to treat me with pity.

This was the reaction of modern people who had already experienced all kinds of stimulating romance dramas and movies.

The people of this world, who at best have only listened to the self bragging of a wandering poet, I'm sorry to say, but they were no match for me.

The fineness facial muscles
to the most detailed nuance.

Using this at my own will, I preformed passionately.

“It’s okay, she said……. and she died.”

“…….”

“Now I have nothing left. I did have two goblins, but I made them leave. I don’t need them……. That’s why it’s okay to not be suspicious of me. There’s really nothing left here.”

I covered my face once again and sobbed.

My acting, which could have made a French actor cry, ended here.

In this depressing atmosphere, the adventurers had started to whisper to one another.

“Hey hey. Who made the honorable Demon Lord cry?”

“I didn’t know he had such circumstances either.”

“I was wondering why there were no guards. Other parties had already wiped this place clean.”

“So he suddenly lost everything. Tsk tsk…….”

As predicted, sympathy fell upon me.

There was something I didn’t predict that happened too. It was the white notice that rose up in mid-air.

【Your devilish eloquence has captivated the people.】

【Adventurer Riff’s affection went up by 2.】

【Adventurer Dail’s affection went up by 1.】

There was an affection system as well, huh.

That made things easier.

“I am grateful to have met you all, though.”

I smiled faintly.

Giving off an atmosphere as if I had seen the sorrows and joys of life was the point.

“You didn’t kill a Demon Lord like me immediately. You showed consideration to me who was seriously injured, and are even supporting me like this. This is the first time I’ve met adventurers as gentle as you all in the entirety of my life……. I had really thought that all

adventurers were villainous people like the ones who had murdered my nanny!”

That was a lie.

A flat out lie.

I knew you men were going to kill me as soon as you saw me. You probably only sheathed your weapons because you wanted the money from the treasury. A villain, as described.

However, no human could dislike being flattered. The adventurers awkwardly scratched their beards.

“No, we didn’t really do that much…….”

“It’s because your honor cooperated so willingly.”

【Adventurer Riff’s affection went up by 4.】

【Adventurer Dail’s affection went up by 3.】

The other 8 adventurer’s affection went up as well.

Did their wariness go down? Compared to earlier, the amount of points that went up rose. My acting got through to them properly.

With a tear drenched face, I grinned broadly.

“I apologize for delaying everyone. Now, let us resume towards the vault.”

“…….”

It wasn't a smile out of happiness, but a forced smile to match other people. I emphasized that feeling. In order to plant the seed of guilt into them.

One of the adventurers coughed into his hand.

"Ehem. That, uh, there's no reason for us to deliberately hurry."

"That's right. The vault isn't going to grow legs and run away."

"Since his honor's foot hurts so much, let's go slowly. He did say all the other demons were gone."

The atmosphere became soft.

There was a saying that says the scariest animal on Earth were humans, but I think opposite. Humans were animals that I could feel most reassured with.

I can not trick a bear. If I encountered a wild warthog, the least a weakling like me could do was get killed.

But humans.

Humans could be deceived.

Through a performance, you could play with the hearts of others.

'Son.'

'You're more of a Devil than I am.'

My father was right.

I did not want to admit it, but I had the inborn talent to deceive people.

Personally, I didn't think it was a desirable skill. It was more appealing to sincerely gain people's trust than through lies.

That was why I avoided using deception unless I felt like my life was in danger. Something like being good at lying, it wasn't a skill worth bragging about.

It was the same now.

"Ah, but."

If these adventurers had not threaten my life.

If they had approached me with a bit more politeness.

I would not have had to bare my fangs.

"Everyone—if we take too much time, other adventurer parties may arrive."

"What?"

"As you all know, there is not even a single goblin left in my castle. As much as it is an empty castle, other adventurers will probably come for the treasure vault as well. This may trouble you all……."

The adventures gave each other unsettled looks.

There were no monsters in this castle. Even if there were some left, these men could use me, the Demon Lord, as a hostage to drive them back. However, there

was something more dangerous than monster.

Other humans.

Adventurers competed against other adventurers rigorously. Treasure hidden in the Demon Lord's castle. The bounty on the Demon Lord's head…… anyone would want to get their hands on these. Even if they had to kill other humans.

In <Dungeon Attack>, the hero didn't fight only demons. There were many adventurer parties that attacked in attempt to take the hero's wealth. They only claimed to be adventurers, but they were no different to a group of thieves.

"Damn it. I didn't consider that."

"There's no certainty that other adventurers will come."

The men started to frown. They had taken in seriously my lie.

"Dumbass. Did you not hear that this place was assaulted 3 times already? Other wolves, who've heard the rumor will come."

"Not good. This is not good……. We just caught the Demon Lord and you're now telling me to risk my life to fight other lively adventurers? Don't joke with me."

"Shit. Like we'd hand him over to a bunch of dogs."

These were adventurers, who had just left their

hometowns for the first time to get rich quick. They couldn't contain their excitement when they were presented the opportunity to turn their lives around.

"Everyone."

I spoke in a calm voice. Their gaze naturally collected onto me.

"At this moment, other adventurers may already be approaching. How about making our way to the vault first? There's not a lot of time. We can discuss things while moving."

The men glanced at each other once more and nodded all together.

"His honor is right. Let's take the treasure first. Yeah!"

"Let's get a move on! We don't have the right to show our faces in Jalsen without a few scratches or two."

With loud voices, the adventurers resumed their march. Good.

This was enough for now.

I gave them an agreeable suggestion. Their guard against Demon Lord Dantalian may not be completely gone, but at least they don't see me as an 'enemy' now. Their affection continued to rise. That was a good sign.....

“New guy, carry his honor on your back. That’ll be faster.”

“Roger that, captain!”

The man lifted me up promptly.

“Ah, thank you very much.”

“What do you eat normally to be so light? You look fine on the outside but it’s like your insides are empty.”

As if I weighed nothing, the man walked with light steps. I suddenly ended up getting a piggy back ride, but this was much better than forcing myself to walk.

I guess you could say that I got passed the second obstacle.

I was required to open the treasure vault, hence giving them a reason to keep me alive. Furthermore, I was able to raise their affection towards me, giving them the false impression that I was on their side. It was favorable. However, there were still two problems remaining.

The first problem was that I had no idea if a treasury existed at all. As soon as they find out that I lied, regardless of affection points or whatever, they’ll murder me.

The other problem was getting rid of the adventurers. If I couldn’t solve these two problems then my fate will always lead to death.

‘Base status’

I moved my lips slightly and whispered.

Nothing happened.

Without being discouraged, I kept experimenting.

‘Dungeon status, dungeon situation……. Mm. Not this either, huh.’

I currently had the ability to access the game system.

It was merely an assumption, but I should be able to use the other status windows than just affection points. For example, being able to see the map of the castle. I was aiming for that.

My prediction was soon confirmed.

‘Demon Lord Castle Status.’

With a ‘tiring~’, a sound rang in my head.

White words appeared before me.

Dantalian's Demon Lord Castle

Type: Cave

Title: None

Rank: F

Special Effect: None

Military Force: None

Citizens: None

Wealth: 100 Libra

※ The castle is in ruins. Neighborhood kids refer to this place as a fun playground. This place is in danger of being conquered at any moment. Urgently open the 'Employment Tab' and hire forces.

Is that so. At the very most, this was it.

I was hoping that perhaps even a little amount of forces remained, but there really was nothing left. This really was nothing more than a kiddy playground.

I was grateful that I had any wealth at all.

'Libra' was the name of the common currency in <Dungeon Attack>. There was a time I was bored and

decided to compare currencies. In Korean money, 1 libra was 500,000 won⁴⁾.

Right now I had 100 libra.

In other words, I was given about 50,000,000 won⁵⁾.

How far could I get with this.

After searching through all kinds of functions in the game, I finally found what I wanted.

‘Employment Tab’.

A half transparent list appeared before me.

Monster	Stamina	Attack	Defense	Price
Slime	F	F	E	4Libra
Weak Fairy	F	E	F	8Libra
Goblin Deserter	E	E	F	12Libra
Weak Golem	D	D	C	20Libra

.....

So weak.

And damn expensive.

No matter how you looked at it, 200,000 won for a slime was overcharging. In this day and age, you could buy two fair cows with 200,000 won. Not calves, but

4) TL note: 433 USD

5) TL note: 43,335 USD

cows. How could a useless slime be twice the price of a cow used for farm work?

Most likely, the price went up because of the game difficulty.

‘Tsk. This messes up my plan…….’

At first, I was thinking of pouring my wealth into hiring a unit of monsters. Even if I spent all my money and hired 8 goblin deserters, the chances of them winning against the adventurers was uncertain.

No, these men might be more pathetic than I think. Was it worth testing out?

‘Status’.

I muttered in my mind while staring at an adventurer.

【You do not have sufficient affection with this person.】

【Only the simplest stats will be viewable.】

With the same ‘tiring~’ sound from before, a window appeared above the adventurer’s head.

I assumably needed more affection points to see more precise information.

Name	Stamina	Attack	Defense	Affection
Riff Hoffman	E	E	E	6

“Uhg”

I unintentionally let out a groan.

A little bit stronger than a goblin.

He was certainly weak, but that small difference was a big matter to me. The other adventurers had about the same stats. Even if I hired 8 goblins, they were far off from being able to overwhelm these adventurers.

What to do.

There was no certainty in winning or losing. Should I leave it to fate and take a gamble? To risk my life on a gamble. That wasn't my style. I preferred to raise my chances in winning before going into a fight.

As I was in deep thought.

“We're almost there!”

An adventurer shouted.

We were almost at the Demon Lord's room.

“Hah. Why is this cave so big?”

“This is your first time coming to a Demon Lord's Castle. This is nothing. Normally these castles are full of traps, so you have to tread incredibly slowly.”

The adventurers were chatting rowdily.

There wasn't much time left. I had to make a decision soon.

Should I make it up by numbers and hire a lot of slimes or fairies? Or, should I hire the strongest golem and attack them by surprise? No. Both sides were far away from being ‘certain victory’. If I allow myself to get in danger…….

……Okay. This was the best option.

“Alright! Let’s go in.”

The adventurers poured into the room.

I bit my lips forcefully. Skin tore and blood flowed into my mouth.

If I had to rate my chances, then 70%. It was pathetically low for something that had my life on the line. Regardless, this was the utmost best.

I thought I was free once my father had died. I ran away hoping that I could live a peaceful life.

I got this far and you’re telling me that my life was in danger again? To fall into a strange world and to tell me to die without a single clue on what’s going on just because I had become a Demon Lord? Don’t make me laugh!

Who cares if I’m a Demon Lord or something. If there was a fellow that was trying to end my idle life, then I’ll face them with no mercy. I will live no matter what…….



The Demon Lord's room was a miserable wreck.

"Is there really treasure here?"

This place had most likely been plundered many times already. Be it the bed or the chairs, the wooden furniture were toppled over. It was hard to believe that there was a treasure vault in this mess.

The captain, Riff, spoke.

"Your honor. Hurry up and open up that Mooirakkutoung or whatever."

I nodded.

"Yes. Do not worry. I know that..... ack!"

I fell over while getting off the new guy's back. I had twisted my ankle on purpose.

The adventurers reacted in panic.

"Ouch, are you okay?"

"Hey! Support him properly!"

"I-I'm okay. I'm alright."

I stood up by myself with trembling legs. The core point of acting was to obtain sympathy. If I borrowed another person's shoulder here, there's the danger that they might see me as an annoying wounded person.

I went to a wall while limping.

“Everyone, it is here.”

“Ah? All I see is a wall.”

“There’s a carving here only visible to Demon Lords. If you place your hand on the carving and recite a specific spell, then the vault will open.”

I lied without missing a beat.

The adventurers had intrigued expressions on their faces.

“Oh. Magic, huh.”

Beginner adventurers were ignorant in regards to magic, like these adventurers who originally used to be simple farmers or lumberjacks until now. The majority of these men most likely haven’t seen proper magic in their entire life. If I told them it was magic, then they’d simply nod and say “Is that so.”.

I made a request while displaying a pained face.

“Everyone, I’m sorry, but please move 10 steps away from me.”

“Why?”

“Only a Demon Lord can release the magic on the vault. It will never unlock if even one outsider is nearby. If a mistake were to happen, a defense mechanism could occur and you may be hurt.”

“A defense mechanism, you say…….”

“Worst case scenario, the treasure could be sealed forever.”

The adventurer’s face immediately turned grave.

As if I had just threatened to take their treasure away from these humans turned money grubbers, the effect was instant. Following my instructions, all 10 men stood in a line and backed off.

One step. Another step.

The adventurers spoke after taking exactly 10 steps.

“How is that. 10 steps, just like you asked.”

“.....”

These adventurers were sincere in useless places.

I was in awe, but expression wise, I continued to smile firmly.

“That’s exactly 10 steps. No more and no less. There is a good chance that you all will not be affected by the magic at that range. Well done.”

The adventurers grinned broadly.

“This is nothing.”

“I’m a bit of a perfectionist.”

I think they wholeheartedly believed that.

I’m struck with wonder whenever I meet humans as self-confident as these guys. Humans, with this kind of brain, were able to be separated from Homo sapiens

sapiens.

Wouldn't this be considered a kind of miracle?

I turned my back towards them and faced the wall.

"I shall now begin casting the spell. Everyone, please be silent!"

Obviously, there was no carving on the wall. The fact that the treasury was here was a blatant lie, like I've been saying.

But there was something I did believe in.

'Demon Lord Castle's Wealth.'

White words appeared on the smooth wall.

Demon Lord Castle's Wealth

Withdrawal Amount: xxx Libra

Total Balance: 100 Libra

※ Warning. If you withdraw too much at once, you may go bankrupt.

This was one of the game functions I found earlier.

Thanks to the Demon Lord's right, I could withdraw funds wherever and whenever I wanted. It'd all be over if I took out a bunch of coins here.

However, it'd be troubling to simply hand over the money.

A small performance.

Add some spice and gift-wrapping.

Taking in a deep breath—as seriously as I could, I shouted.

“Mahabanyabaramildashimgyeong(摩訶般若波羅蜜多心經)⁶⁾……!”

………….

……I honestly did shout this seriously.

It was back when I wrote Minlakdong on the ground. The conversations were certainly being translated, but the adventurers **could not exactly pronounce** the word ‘Minlakdong’. Hence, all the conversations weren’t being translated cleanly.

“Gwanjajacobosal Hengshimbanyabaramildashi
Jogyeonohoengaegoeng Doilchaegoaek, Sarija,
Saekbeuligoen Goengbeulisaek Saekjeukshigeong
Geongjeukshisaek Soosanghaengshik Yeokbooyeoshi…….”

For example, words that couldn’t be translated into this world’s language; chemical formulas like H₂O or professional terms like ‘Deformation’, could not be

6) TL note: Mahaprajnaparamita Sutra(of the Korean pronunciation). If you’re genuinely curious as to what he’s chanting, it’s the famous ‘Heart Sutra’ in Manayana Buddhism.

translated. Furthermore, words that I perceived as proper nouns weren't translated either. This was the reason why the adventurers had no idea what Minlakdong meant. Things like Mahabanyabaramildashimgyeon were the same.

Despite the fact that Minlak had the meaning of 'citizen happiness', it was not converted. Even banyabalamildashimgyeon could be interpreted, but it wasn't to these men.

The reason behind this was because I wasn't saying these words with the meaning in mind.

Thus.

"T-That's the demon language?"

"I have no idea what he's saying but it sounds menacing."

"I feel like something is making my heart tremble……."

To the adventurers, it would really seem like I was shouting an **unknown incantation**.

"Beobgoensang Beulsaenbeulmyeol Beulgeuboojeong Boojeunbeulgam Shigo Geongjeongmoosaek……."

While I used my mouth to keep chanting, I used my eyes to earnestly stare at the window.

I had to slowly time when to take the money out.

Demon Lord Castle's Wealth

Withdrawal Amount: 79 Libra

Total Balance: 21 Libra

※ Warning. If you withdraw too much at once, you may go bankrupt.

I decided to take out about 8/10 of all I had.

It'd probably be suspicious if I withdrew a solid amount of 80, so I purposely set it to 79.

“Ajaeajae Baraajae Baraseunajae Moji Sabaha—!”

I lifted my arms up and yelled gloriously.

As I said the last line of the incantation, I thought the word ‘withdraw’ in my mind.

Then, silver coins formed in mid-air and fell.

“S-Silver! It's silver!”

“How much is all that!?”

“It really was magic!”

5 silver coins equalled 1 gold coin. In total, 395 silver coins rained down. The average farmer in <Dungeon Attack> made around 15 silver a year.

Meaning, this was a jackpot for the adventurers.

“Oh! Ooooooh……!”

Silver coins were forming a heaping pile on the floor.
80% of my entire fortune was pulled out in an instant.
Their bodies were probably burning up from seeing so much money rain in front of them.

“Hey. You guys haven’t forgotten that we’re splitting this up equally for each of us, right?”

“Of course. Whoever tries to change their word now, I’ll kill you!”

The adventurers stared at the silver with bloodshot eyes.

The smell of greed flowed from their mouths.

Demon Lord Castle’s Wealth

Withdrawal Amount: xx Libra

Total Balance: 21 Libra

※ Warning. If you withdraw too much at once, you may go bankrupt.

The final coin dropped.

Like a bunch of wolves, the adventurers tried to rush forward.

What impatient men.

Aiming for when they took their first step—I raised my hand quickly.

“Do not approach yet! You’ll be cursed!”

“C-Curse?”

Hearing the disturbing word, they came to a halt.

I fell to my knees

and as if I was under some intense pain, I started to groan.

“Gaaaah……!”

I contorted my face as much as I could.

Foam overflowed from my mouth.

The adventurers were startled by the sudden situation.

“W-What’s going on!? What’s going on, your honor!?”

“It’s black magic! He’s been cursed by black magic!”

The men stumbled back in fear.

In order to make my performance seem more real, I collided my already broken ankle on the ground. Pain vibrated through me. An agonizing scream ruptured from my lungs.

“Ack— Kuaaaaaaaaaaaaah!”

I cried out while grabbing my eye sockets. While doing so, I took a glimpse at the adventurers from between my fingers. Their faces were pale. There were even some men

trying to make a run for it. My greatest performance was working.

“Oh God. That’s terrible…….”

“Just what’s happening? Are you okay!?”

One of the braver adventureres tried to approach me, but I hurried prevented him from doing so.

“S–Stay back! This is the consequence for using black magic…… If you get close, aaagh, you could be affected as well…… kuh, gaah!”

“Hiiih!”

The man stopped promptly.

The adventurers had watched silver coins appear out of thin air. To them this was magic. They could do nothing but believe that whatever I told them was magic was true.

The adventurers started to mutter to each other.

“By any chance. Did he tell us to take 10 steps back…… for our sake?”

“It was his chance to get rid of us…….”

Yes.

This was the response I wanted.

If my plan was going to work, I had to raise their affection rate towards me as high as possible. And what would leave the strongest impression on someone?

When someone sacrifices oneself to save them.

Like right now.

“Huaaaaaaak!”

I writhed in pain more intensely.

“W-Wait. He’ll die at this rate! Are you sure we shouldn’t stop him!?”

“You idiot, did you not hear him say it was black magic? Have you not heard the stories of people dying by some weird curse!?”

“Dail is right. The only thing we can do is…… regrettably, wait here patiently.”

“Damn it.”

Some of the adventurers cursed angrily.

At this point, notice windows popped up continuously.

【Your devilish performance has captivated the people.】

【Adventurer Riff’s affection went up by 15.】

【Adventurer Dail’s affection went up by 13.】

【Adventurer Zed’s affection went up by 19.】

Perfect.

As intended, a sharp increase in affection.

With my nails, I ripped some skin off of my face. Red blood spurted out. It was incredibly painful, however this

was light compared to the weight of my life. My screams continued on for a while.

Moments later.

I let out a ragged breath.

“It’s, okay now……. You can collect the coins now…… it’s fine.”

“Mm.”

“E-Ehem.”

They’re attitude had completely changed.

The wolves that desperately wanted to swallow up the coins earlier were nowhere to be seen now. The adventurers were all afraid that the coins might still be cursed.

“You go first and check.”

“No no. You know the saying ‘respect your elders’, the oldest should go.”

The men presented the chance to go first to one another, but never taking it themselves.

Having enough, the party leader stood forward.

“Screw it! You’re all cowards! I don’t know why you have anything down there. I should probably chop it off with my axe. You were all confident in conquering a Demon Lord’s Castle, but look at you all now!”

The leader of this party, Riff, roared.

“And Dail, you one-eyed person. You’ve been with me for 2 years now. What are you doing hiding with those greenhorns!”

“Well, this is my first time witnessing black magic.”

“Oh, look at you still making excuses. What’s a fellow, who’s a senior, doing cowering like a newbie!”

“Then you go first.”

“Yeah. The captain should go first.”

The other men nodded in agreement.

Riff twitched his nose.

“I was going to even if you didn’t tell me, you cowards.”

Riff walked proudly towards the pile of silver.

The adventurers whispered to one another while watching their captain march.

“He’s being prideful again.”

“He’s got his nose bent plenty of times while acting proud, too.”

“What’d you say!?”

Riff glared at them. His bear-like face looked like some vandal when he scowled. The men avoided his glare and whistled.

Riff turned back to the silver pile.

“Hoo... hoo..... Here I go!”

He reached out and grabbed a coin.

It was obvious, but absolutely nothing happened. There was no black magic in the first place.

Not knowing this fact, Riff exaggeratedly laughed mockingly at the others.

“Look at that! Didn’t his honor, Demon Lord, already say that there was no curse now? Idiots, I should just cut your dicks off now! Kekeke!”

“.....”

The adventurers glanced at each other awkwardly.

Watching the chain of events from a distance, I couldn’t help but mockingly smirk.

I wonder if it was because I had acquired enough affection, but I could see more detailed information on Riff’s status window. There, I could see the mental state of Riff that he wasn’t voicing.

Name Riff Hoffman

Race Human

Job Lumberjack(B) Adventurer(F)

Reputation Dust in the galaxy

Leadership E **Might** E **Intelligence** F

Politics F **Charm** F **Technique** E

Affection: 21

Current Mental State: ‘Ah, shit. I thought my liver was going to fall out. My legs are still shaking……!’

It was a bluff.

Well done scolding your subordinates when you were also trembling in fear. The other adventurers, not having realized this, were scratching the back of their heads.

“T-Then let’s go as well.”

“Mm. The captain did prove it to us.”

“Lesser people like us should follow his lead.”

The men approached the pile carefully.

“Hah. You sorry batch of men.”

Riff was sneering but he didn’t try to stop the other

adventurers from approaching in particular.

Following after, the other adventurers started feeling up the coins greedily. In case someone tried to take more coins than they should, the adventurers watched each other intently.

“If there’s a single coin in your backpocket, I’ll beat you up personally.”

“Split everything equally. Don’t try to be a thief!”

Quite a lot of time had passed before they had finally counted all the coins.

Riff snorted with satisfaction.

“Hu. In total there’s 386 silver coins.”

Huh.

I narrowed my brows a bit. I’m certain I had taken out 395 silver coins.

Where’d the remaining 9 go to.

“.....”

“.....”

A couple of the men were fidgeting nervously.

.....So they couldn’t hold back and managed to steal some. Despite the fact that they kept threatening each other, there were some people who were able to successfully steal in the end. How marvelous.

“Alright. Let’s fairly split up 38 pieces each.”

“Then there’ll be 6 remaining. What about the change?”

“What about it? I, the captain, will take it.”

Riff shamelessly declared.

The other adventurers booed and sent jeers.

“Captain was the one that said to divide equally no matter what, in the first place!”

“That’s dirty. Dirty!”

“Shut up you swines! If it wasn’t for me, you cowards wouldn’t have approached the money at all.”

“That’s that and this is this!”

“What’s that and what’s this! Speak clearly!”

Beginner adventurer party had met internal conflict so soon.

It was like an argument between kids.

After a lively debate, it was decided that Riff would take the change.

“Tsk tsk. A bunch of narrow-minded bigots.”

Riff grumbled. It seemed that he got offended that the others were so against conceding the leftover 6 pieces of silver to him, the captain. I couldn’t tell who the narrow-minded person was.

Anyways, it was starting to become time.

“Everyone.”

I opened my mouth.

"I'm sorry to disturb you all while you're busy, but I have something to tell you all."

"Hm? Oh, what is it?"

Their response was half-hearted. The adventurers were occupied shoving their portion of the coins into their bags or shoes. Some of them were even loosening their belts to shove the silver into their underwear. It was quite dirty.

"I apologize, but the event we had feared has occurred. Just now, other adventurer parties has invaded the castle."

"....."

Their hands froze immediately.

"What?"

"I am a Demon Lord. There's a magic system set up that notifies me whenever someone invades my castle. A moment ago, I heard a bell ring in my head."

The adventurer's eyes opened wide in panic.

"D-Demon Lord, is that true?"

"Yes. Unfortunately, this is the truth."

"Isn't there the chance that you heard wrong?"

".....Of course, there is the possibility. I too am hoping that I heard wrong. However, I've heard the

same bell ring 4 times this month. To be mishearing things now is very unlikely.”

I confessed to them with a sad expression.

The men were visibly shaken. While I acted, there were times that I felt like I could see other people’s emotions in the shape of a thick cloud. I was touching that cloud here and there and forming it to my will.

“T-The numbers. Do you know how many people?”

“Not exactly. I could take a guess by counting the rings…….”

I bit my lips, giving off the feeling that the number was hard to reveal. Seeing this, the adventurers grew more anxious.

“I don’t care if it’s an estimate! Just tell us how many there are!”

“……The bell rang 3 times in a row.”

“What does that mean?”

“The bell rings once every 10 people who invade my castle. In other words, at the very least, 30 people has invaded.”

Thirty people.

An amount of people too large for the people in front of me to handle.

The adventurers became pale.

□ *Adventurer, Cowardly Looter, Riff Hoffman*
Empire Calender: Year 1505, Month 4, Day 4
Dantalian's Demon Lord Castle

I didn't like the situation at all.

According to what the Demon Lord had said, there was another group of invading adventurers in the cave. The number was at the very least, 30. This was no joke…… damn it.

I had picked weaklings on purpose to bring here. People with skill demanded more money. In the case of my adventurer group, the treasure in the vault was to be split fairly, but the bounty on the Demon Lord Dantalian was all mine for the taking. If I wanted to establish this kind of agreement, I could only gather these run of the mill adventurers.

Shit. I should have just spent more money and hired

skilled people. No, even if I did, 30 people was too much. They wouldn't be able to handle this amount. My insides were strangely bitter.....

“We could win if we hold out in this room!”

“Are you insane. It's 30 people, thirty! We'll be overwhelmed!”

“If you're going to fight, then leave me out. I never had the hobby of killing myself. I'll get out on my own.”

“Hah! This filthy coward! Finally showing your true colors!”

The men were split into two groups and arguing.

People who wanted to stay here and fight, and people who wanted to escape. They had been arguing for over 10 minutes now, but they were yet to come together like they did before.

Honestly, I didn't have a good idea either. Obviously we should run, but there was no certainty that we wouldn't meet the other adventurer party on the way out. That was the problem. Crap, what do I have to do to get out safely.....

.....Wait.

Think about it the other way around.

If we had to face them then face them. It's fine as long as I get away safely. It's not my problem if the

others live or die.

I took out a map and checked. There were 3 routes from here to the cave entrance.

I approached the Demon Lord and asked him.

“Hey, your honor. How many paths are there that leads from the castle entrance to here?”

“There are 3.”

As expected, the map was accurate. Even the Demon Lord confirmed it.

“Do you know which route they’re coming from?”

“I’m sorry, but I can’t tell that far…….”

The Demon Lord spoke with an ashamed expression.

“No, it’s fine. I’m grateful you even told me about the invaders.”

I lightly patted the Demon Lord’s shoulder. Once doing so, he lowered his head graciously.

I said this before, but this guy really has no guts. Even though he’s a Demon Lord, he’s been speaking respectfully to a human like me. Does he have no pride? To say it nicely, he knows his place. What more would he get then get hit if he showed defiance. Kekeke.

At that moment, the Demon Lord looked straight at my eyes. He appeared weirdly serious so I couldn’t help but become stiff in response.

“Sir Riff. I’m fated to be captured by adventurers no matter what.”

“Hm? So?”

“Then, I at least wish to choose a safer path. You all did not kill me the moment you saw me. Just that alone makes me wish to be on your side. Please live, and make a wise decision.”

Aha.

He was begging for me to save his life.

I started to feel familiarity with the little one in front of me. Pride wasn’t needed if it meant survival. I thought so as well.

“Hehe. You sure know your stuff, your honor. Okay, don’t worry. If you believe in me then you will definitely get to the city safely.”

“Thank you. Thank you very much…….”

It was cute because he looked like a pet, lowering his head over and over again like that.

I tapped the Demon Lord’s cheek while chuckling. It was a sign of affection. It’s okay to be happy.

I shouted at the men that were still arguing.

“Attention!”

They shut their mouths. I guess they realized that there was no point in fighting each other. They glared this

way with bloodshot eyes.

“We’re retreating.”

“But captain!”

“Listen up you greenhorns. Are you not able to see properly because of the coins in your pockets? Who do you think you are? You guys only faced 2 goblins on our way here. How do you plan to face 30 adventurers with just that ability?”

I gave them a menacing look.

I’ve grown up being told that I had a vulgar looking face. There was no one here that was brave enough to face me properly.

“Stop dreaming. You’ll die without being able to do anything.”

“……But captain. There’s no guarantee that things will go well if we escape.”

The person to speak was the one who was silent and didn’t get involved in the argument.

This bald one-eyed man was a reasonably skilled senior.

“What are you going to do if we unluckily meet the enemy? We could at least hold out here and fend them off, but there’s no answer if we meet them out there.”

“I know, you bastard. That’s why we’ll split up and go

down three separate paths.”

“Three separate paths?”

“There’s three routes from here to the castle entrance. Pick your path and run that way.”

A moment of silence passed.

The men creased their brows.

“……Captain. Surely you don’t mean.”

“Yeah. One of the three groups will meet the enemy no matter what. However, oppositely, the other two groups will live.”

“That’s just an escape-goat!”

The one-eyed man retorted loudly. He must have been seriously enraged because the veins on his neck were visible. Tsk, he’s a good guy but the places he got serious at made it tiring.

The other guys complained as well, saying things like “That’s not right!” and “We’d rather all die together!”.

A bunch of peerless fools they were. You all don’t know what death means. That’s why you’re easily able to say that you’re willing to die together.

……But there was no benefit in speaking truthfully here. Let’s talk while mixing lies here and there. What? I’m only honest to myself. I never said that I was honest with other people as well, did I?

“Shut up you punks! My job is to send as many people as I can back home!”

They twitched. Would you look at that. They got scared just because I shouted a bit. There’s a limit to expectations if they thought they could fight 30 people with this attitude.

“You guys all have a family, right? Man’s pride? That’s good. Companionship? That’s also nice. But what’s the point of worrying about all that if we end up dead, huh? Who’s going to take responsibility of your families?”

“.....”

“What about your kids? What about the fellow village people working in the fields in our stead? What about your wives?”

A complicated silence fell upon them.

As expected, there’s nothing as persuasive as family. Even though I was illiterate, I at least knew how to deal with people.

“The one’s who are alive will take responsibility for the families of the one’s that have fallen.”

I made my words a notch softer and concluded.

“We have no more corners to back up to, you punks. Think about your families and the village. Everything else

is useless. Forget it all and only think of your families…….”

They lowered their heads.

Of course. If you thought with reason then my suggestion was the best. It was just the fact that they had to sacrifice someone else’s life that was hard to accept. They had to cut off that part of their minds.

The adventurers separated into 3 units.

4, 3, 3 people each.

“Let’s get going now.”

I ordered sternly.

Which route met with the enemy, that all relied on luck. Well, if you asked if it really was entirely based on luck then that wasn’t right.

I purposely placed the Demon Lord in another group. If the enemy had a magical energy detecting device then it would react to the Demon Lord. The target will naturally go to him. In other words, he worked as bait. I was good at using my head in this kind of places.

Alright. Time to genuinely run away.

Please die, my close comrades.

So that way, I can live.

□ *Weakest Demon Lord, Rank 71st, Dantalian*
Empire Calendar: Year 1505, Month 4, Day 4
Dantalian's Demon Lord Castle

The adventurers patted each other's shoulders lightly. They then departed down their own path out of the three.

"Go and die, you dogs."

"You'll be the one dying. I'll make sure to enjoy your wife in your stead."

The adventurers swearing at each other was simply a coping method. They knew that if their farewells were heavy then their feet would be heavy as well.

The leader of the unit I was with spoke.

"We should get going as well."

"Yeah."

I was on the back of the new guy again.

The unit I was with specially had 4 members. It was because they had extra luggage to carry, which was me. The person that was temporarily acting as leader was the one-eyed bald man. The person who refuted against Riff earlier.

“.....”

“.....”

Gloomy footsteps echoed throughout the cavern.

Not a single person said a word. The shadow of people reflected on the cavern wall by the torches. The shadows wavered like a mirage.

When Riff suggested to divide the group into three, I honestly wanted to run around in joy. That was the idea I was originally going to propose. I was afraid of a group of 10 adventurers together, but I didn't fear a group split up into 3's and 4's.

They were foolish.

Riff suggested to split up in order to raise his chances of survival as much as possible, however, he was mistaken from the premise. He completely believed the words of a Demon Lord. Normally, adventurers and Demon Lords were supposed to be hostile to one another, but they had easily trusted my information.

Were they being careless, or did I really appear to be

that pitiful. If it was the latter, then that was a relief. It was proof that my acting skills weren't rusty yet. The price to pay for being careless shall be huge, Riff.

I stared at the empty space in front of me.

A half transparent map was being projected. Red dots had split down three separate paths and were drifting away from each other.

Amongst the functions in the system, there was the ability to see a map. Conveniently, the adventurers were displayed as red dots and even showed their current positions.

There was a thick cavern wall between each routes. There were pathways that connected the routes at a couple of places, but only I, who had the system map, knew this. The adventurers had no means of communication whatsoever.

Even if a massacre was to occur.

'Employment Tab.'

I spoke in my mind.

A ridiculously cheerful 'turring~' sound effect rang.

Monster	Stamina	Attack	Defense	Price
Slime	F	F	E	4Libra
Weak Fairy	F	E	F	8Libra
Goblin Deserter	E	E	F	12Libra
Weak Golem	D	D	C	20Libra

For a slight moment.

It was probably for only an instant, but there was hesitation in my eyes.

The adventurers had split themselves up into 3 groups. They trusted the Demon Lord Dantalian when they should have been hostile against him. They had not only lowered their fighting prowess, but they were mentally unprepared as well.

The optimum requirement for a surprise attack.

But the reason why I was hesitating for a moment…… who knows.

If I hired monsters and attacked the adventurers here, then I'd be crossing the Rubicon River. For the adventurers to die or for myself to die. Only one of the two future existed. There was no going back.

“.....”

The inside of my mouth felt dry.

It was impossible to return once I've made my decision.

I was realizing the weight of my choice.

Then, the second choice box since coming to this world had appeared.

【1. Annihilate the adventurers like this.】

【2. Be taken by the adventurers like this.】

……Just as I thought. I figured out in what situations these choices appeared.

When my life was on the line, or when other people's lives were on the line. These boxes popped up in those immensely vital points, as if telling me to really think about my decision carefully.

Regardless, my obvious choice was option number 1.

A hopeful future for a Demon Lord captured by humans did not exist. Even if the adventurers decided not to kill me, it was useless. The adventurers will sell me over to the city in order to gain the bounty, and then my head will be displayed on the town square to show off to the people about how well the cutting off of my head was done.

So thus, I selected number 1.

I'll kill every last human before me.

'Hire Weak Golem.'

【You've hired a Weak Golem.】

【Would you like to summon Weak Golem?】

My entire fortune of 21 Libra shrunk down to a single Libra in an instant.

At the same moment, the cave floor was covered in light.

“H-Huuh?”

“What’s going on!?”

The adventurers panicked.

The light caused by the summoning circle lit up the dark cavern entirely for a brief second. The moment everyone’s gaze was focused on the circle, I bared my teeth.

CRUUUNCH!

It sounded like a plastic bag was being ripped. However, it was something much more raw than a plastic bag. With my teeth, I had bit down strongly onto the ear of the newbie adventurer who was carrying me.

“Kuaaaaaah!”

The adventurer cried out and flailed his body. I, who was on his back, fell to the floor. I was already preparing a safe way to fall, so the impact wasn’t too

big.

“J-Jack!? What happened! What’s wrong!?”

“Guh, ah, ear! My ear!”

The vision that was focused on the summoning circle moved to here.

With a genuinely fearful expression, I pointed towards the other side.

“Everyone! Behind you! Look behind you!”

In the spot I was pointing at was an arm made of stone reaching out from the earth.

The stone arm grasped the ground and, like a demon coming out of Hell itself, a bulky body emerged. A disturbing ‘grrrrdduh, grduh’ sound resonated. It was the sound of boulders grinding against each other. The adventurers stared at the summoning magic with their mouths agape.

“M-My God…….”

“Raise your shields! Take out your swords!”

The adventurers were moving about in confusion. Nevertheless, the bald one-eyed man, proving that he wasn’t just the sub-captain by name, gave orders to his comrades. However, your enemy wasn’t only the golem that had suddenly appeared.

“Mmmm……!?”

I jumped back onto the back of the new guy and covered his mouth. The man opened his eyes widely.

His eyes looked like they were shouting, ‘What are you doing!?’.

He had a dagger on his hip that I had been eyeing since the beginning. I pulled his dagger out and brought it down on his throat. Once, twice, thrice, and finally for the fourth time. I didn’t even give him the opportunity to resist.

“Eub, pbb…… huppbb…….”

The newbie screamed, but the sound was muffled by my hand making it only sound like a moan.

Soon the groans became bright red blood and drenched my hand stickily.

“Uuh……eub…….”

I silently stared down at the new guy’s eyes.

Finally, his body went limp.

This took 8 seconds.

The other adventurers had no idea that the newbie was murdered behind them.

Thus, I had committed my first murder, but I didn’t have time to get sentimental. The situation was still dire. I immediately hid the dagger in my clothes and turned my head.

“■■■■■■——!”

Right on time, the golem had climbed out fully.

As if celebrating the fact that it had escaped from the stifling underground world, the golem raised its head and let out a long roar. The ceiling of the cave shook, making the stalactites tremble as well. Even if it was called ‘weak golem’, at this moment, the one dominating this space was that monster.

This was a monster.

This was a demon.

It looked so much different from humans and that atrocious outer appearance was enough to plant fear into the hearts of humans.

“Hiiiiik……!”

The adventurers shrunk back. One man’s arms were trembling so much that he had dropped his torch. Since the light from the summoning circle was gone, the cavern had returned back to being dark—that raised the adventurer’s fears to no limit. The light from the torch gave the cave a reddish glow, giving only slight glimpses of that massive body in the distant darkness.

People who used to do farm work for a living in their

hometown.

These people may have been realizing for the first time.

That adventurer was a discreditable occupation that normally faced against mythical terrors like this.

“E-Euuuh…….”

The three adventurers gathered together. This was an instinct implanted into humans, to unite together with their comrades when facing a large beast. However, in this situation that instinct had made them commit a grave mistake.

“■■■, ■■■■■■■■——!”

As big as the golem was, its footsteps were slow.

If the adventurers had spread out instead of grouping together, then they may have been able to deal with the golem. But these men lacked experience. Experience of fighting various types of demons.

Like a tank, the golem advanced towards the men. Its feet came down with a thud and shook the ground. The tremors violently jolted the darkness.

The adventurers could do nothing but hold up their wooden shields. Their entire body had become rigid. They should probably be complimented for not having

run away on the spot.

“T-This person is dead!”

I intensely shook the already disordered adventurers by another level. I was holding up the new guy’s chest and shouting.

“He suddenly fell! It’s black magic! Someone unbeknownst to me is assaulting everyone! Quickly, please get away!”

“What…….”

A moment of unrest.

However, faltering for even a second while a golem was right in front of you, that was more than enough time to bring about a tragic end.

The adventurers’ attention was dispersed. Aiming for that chance, the golem swung its fist. The target was the bald one-eyed man. As the person responsible for this unit, when he had heard that the new guy had died, he had turned this way for a brief second. The golem’s heavy stone fist smashed into his body just like that.

There wasn’t even a shout.

His skull was crushed and he was met with instant death.

The wooden shield which the village blacksmith had made was of no use.

“.....Uh, aah?”

One step late, the survivors reacted.

Honestly, to say that it was a proper reaction was miserable.

One adventurer, as if giving up on all hope, fell to his knees. The other adventurer decided oppositely and was about to escape. Tossing away his torch and sword, he got rid of anything that was weighing him down and ran.

It'd be troubling if I missed one person here.

“This way! Run this way!”

“Uh, ah! Aah!”

Giving me an obscure response, the adventurer ran towards me. It was like the behavior unconsciously taken by people during a fire. When told to escape this way, they ran towards that direction recklessly.

I pulled the man close and whispered.

“Calm your breathing. Golems lack good eye-sight and hearing. If you quietly hide in the corner of the cave, then you'll be safe. You can believe me. I'm an expert on demon characteristics.”

O-Okay. I understand.”

“Now, follow after me and breathe slowly. One. Two. Hoo.”

“Hoo…… hooo.”

“Good. That’s it. Inhale and exhale slowly.”

The adventurer settled his breathing. I grabbed his hand tightly. It was a well-known fact that people became relaxed when a professional grabbed their hand during a crisis.

“One…….”

The adventurer breathed while following my command. I stealthily pulled out the dagger.

“Two…….”

It was at the moment he was going to breathe out. With the blade, I slit his throat. Calm breathing could never come out of his mouth ever again. Blood filled his gullet and his breathing couldn’t become words. The only sound to come out were gurgles and coughs. Shortly after, the man met death.

At about the same time the man stopped breathing in my arms, the golem had taken care of the other remaining person.

The golem simply raised its foot and stomped the last man. The human body was a lot harder than I had expected. A man’s body wasn’t crushed immediately.

A terrible scream came from the adventurer each time the golem’s feet came down. The screams grew weaker

as the stomping continued. At a certain point, the screams itself had stopped completely. Only the sound of bones breaking echoed lowly. The sticky substance attached to the golem's foot was probably the man's guts.

It was a gruesome conclusion.

“.....Hoo.”

I sat back against the cave wall.

Exhaustion weighed down on my entire body. The heat had yet to subside. I didn't know that warmth could be so unpleasant. On the other hand, the cold coming off the wall was good. It was the perfect temperature for me right now.

Half the temperature.

Half.

“.....It's not over yet.”

I muttered to myself.

I felt tired as if I had stayed up for four nights in a row. Regardless, I had several manuals carved into my skull. Carved like the ancient hieroglyphics in Egypt. The instincts, that was implanted into me since I was a child, whispered to me.

‘Clean up everything.’

If you don't want your crime to be caught henceforth.

‘End what you’ve started.’

If you don’t want malice and apprehension to remain.

“.....”

I calmly knitted my brows.

My pounding chest slowed down.

My breathing settled and my composure returned.

Humans were beasts of instincts.

If you create an instinct for every possible situation, then no matter when and where you are, you’ll be able to cope like a beast of prey.

There was no need for trial and error.

In that sense, my father’s words were correct.

In truth, I, ‘whose life was in danger’ responded by ‘getting rid of the humans who endangered me’ with no hesitation whatsoever. You could say it was thanks to that I could stay alive.

“At any rate, father is still...”

Even after death he was haunting me like a bothersome ghost.

I stood up and went through the pockets of the corpses. This was not stealing.

I’m only taking back what was mine. After going through all the inside pockets and shoes, my fortune went up to 34 gold coins.

It was enough to summon one more golem and a goblin as well.

“Map Window”

The inner map of the cave popped up in mid-air.

I wonder if it was because they were moving cautiously, but the other two groups hadn't gotten that far ahead. I decided to go and wait at the locations that they'll arrive at. Using a shortcut unknown to the adventurers, I got ahead of them.



“Shit, why is there a monster left……!”

The second battle commenced.

The plan was very simple.

The golem was sitting in a dark corner of the tunnel. As much as its body was made of stone, in a dark tunnel, it was impossible to tell the golem apart from the other boulders. So thus, right when the adventurers were passing by, I launched a sudden attack.

The surprise attack worked nicely.

On the first hit an adventurer's head was destroyed. Another adventurer was then grasped by the golem's hand, it then crushed the body with ease.

It took merely 40 seconds for the unit of three to shrink down to only a single man standing.

“Keuuk!?”

I stabbed the back of the remaining adventurer who was focusing on only the golem.

This time it wasn’t a dagger but a long sword. The blade fully pierced through his chest.

“It can’t, be…….”

The adventurer looked down at his chest. He had an expression on his face as if he couldn’t believe that a sword was going through his chest.

The adventurer twisted his face, bright red bloodshot eyes glared at me.

“Demon Lord, you bastard…… betrayed us……!”

“…….”

I pulled the long sword out.

The man fell to the floor. I wonder if the blade had sliced his lungs. His last breath just now was wheezy. Like the sound of air leaking out of a punctured bicycle wheel. That was the man’s last scream.

“Betrayal, huh.”

You were wrong.

I never betrayed you men. On the contrary, it was the opposite. You men were the invaders and this was

Dantalian's home. If you had not charged in here, then you wouldn't have had to die.

"Haah."

I went through the pockets of the corpses.

Red blood was stained on the copper and silver coins. I held these coins tightly.

As long as I was trapped in the role of the Demon Lord Dantalian, other adventurer parties will come to capture me in the future. In preparation for that day, I have to collect war funds.

Demon Lord Castle's Wealth

Withdrawal Amount: xx Libra

Total Balance: 58 Libra

※ Warning. If you withdraw too much at once, you may go bankrupt.

I deposited the money into the castle vault.

If you included the 20 Libra that I had spent on summoning the golem, then I was almost back to having the original amount I had started with. Now everything will be over once I got rid of Riff's group. I climbed up

onto the golem's shoulder and headed towards the next stage.

In a moment, I arrived at the entrance of the castle.

I made the golem lie in wait and stood in a dignified stance at the cave entrance.

Around 20 minutes passed. From the other side of the tunnel a group emerged. It was Riff's unit.

"Hm? If it isn't your honorable Demon Lord."

Riff recognized me and creased his brows.

"How come you're by yourself? Where are the others?"

I did not answer.

I wonder if they had noticed that the atmosphere was grim. The group stopped walking on their own. Well, if you had eyes then it was normal to feel like something was off. My entire body was fatigued.

"Your honor. I asked where the others are."

Riff asked again. Impatience started to show on his face. 'Everyone is alright. They left to do something real quick'. He was probably hoping for this kind of response. I cut down that hope mercilessly.

"They're dead."

".....Eh?"

"They're all dead. Not just the group that was with me. Excluding your group, all seven men have died.

They're probably enjoying a nice beer together in the after life."

A voice so cold came out of my mouth that it even surprised me as well. It wasn't simply cold, but a strong feeling of mockery was mixed in as well. You could tell by the contorting look on Riff's face.

"Don't tell me..... the enemy attacked on both sides?"

"Sir Riff. Please stop acting the fool when you already understood what has happened. If what you said was correct, then there's no chance for me to be standing here like this."

I chuckled.

"There are no invading enemy forces anywhere in the castle. That was a lie. A big fat lie."

"What?"

"Do you still not understand? It was purely a strategy made to kill each and every one of you."

The adventurer's faces changed dramatically.

From welcoming to suspicion. From suspicion to rage.

But this wasn't enough. My goal was to raise their rage into wrath. I twisted the edges of my mouth and grinned widely.

"It's all thanks to you, Riff. I'm honestly grateful that you believed me so easily. Adventurers trusting a Demon

Lord. The main character to make this unlaughable comedy a success was not me, but you.”

“It was all a trick……?”

“Yes. I killed all 7 people with these hands.”

I took out the dagger I had hidden within my clothes. You could see the blood distinctively on the blade.

“This person and that person were all nothing but fools. Each time I stabbed their necks with this dagger, they each reacted by opening their eyes wide. Did you all honestly believe that a Demon Lord like myself would obediently cooperate? That’s why beginner adventurers who lack experience are laughable.”

“…….”

“The newbie’s reaction was especially amazing. He looked at me and muttered ‘It can’t be’ even though blood was pouring out of his throat. So I politely stabbed him one more time. His wife back home should be relieved. She’s better off not having such a foolish husband——.”

【Adventurer Riff’s affection went down by 21.】

【Adventurer Zed’s affection went down by 23.】

【Adventurer Zack’s affection went down by 20.】

The affection of the three adventurers instantly fell to 0. And amongst those three, someone had thrown a stone at me as hard as they could. With a thuck the stone hit my forehead. The rock contained a lot of killing intent. He probably intended to finish me with that. But, unfortunately, the aim was slightly off so after scratching a bit of my forehead it had flown passed me.

“——That’s not right.”

I’m sorry to say, but that was your last chance to hit me. If you had tossed it a bit better I may have died. You may have received the happy ending of ‘the adventurers defeated the Demon Lord’. It might have been a very slim chance but that opportunity very much existed.

“Not the side of my head, but **here**.”

I tapped the center of my forehead with my finger.

“■■■■■, ■■■■■——I”

It was at that moment the golem attacked them from behind. The golem, that was crouched like a boulder a second ago, reached out its arms.

It was the final battle.

Please do your best to resist, Riff. You’re the first

human to push my head down onto the ground in the past 10 years. I've been vowing to repay you back fully for what you did for quite a while now.

□ *Adventurer, Cowardly Looter, Riff Hoffman*
Empire Calender: Year 1505, Month 4, Day 4
Dantalian's Demon Lord Castle

Impossible. This is impossible!

What is that man? He's giving off a completely different atmosphere compared to earlier! Where'd the man who kept lowering his head like a small fry disappear to? Who is that man over there who's grinning so shamelessly……!?

“Kuaaaaaaah!”

Shit, another one got done in.

It was especially bad that the golem had come from behind. Before we could even react someone was already dead. We tried our best to fight with just us two but…… damn it.

The weakness of inexperienced adventurers was revealed

here. The other remaining adventurer was getting too worked up so he wasn't able to back me up properly. This half-wit. Excitement will only become poison during combat. How has he not shoved this basic information into his skull yet!

.....No. The person who brought these greenhorns to the Demon Lord's castle was me. I was blinded by greed and ended up making a mistake. At the time I didn't think it was wrong. I kept telling myself that it was a smart idea. In the end, did my foolishness bring upon this misfortune.....?

The words the Demon Lord had said while he was being cynical was right. We were too careless. Shit. But I don't plan to die easily, you know!

Despite everything, I'm still a professional when it comes to surviving. I'll struggle disgracefully to the very end if I have to.

"I-I surrender!"

I tossed away my shield and sword.

The man before me uttered a "Oh?", and raised the corners of his mouth. That smile came incredibly naturally to him. That was probably his true-self; cold-blooded, merciless, and more sinister than anyone else.

“Aren’t you being quite well-behaved, Captain Riff.”

“I will do whatever you want if you spare my life. I—I really did not know. That your honor was such a terrifying person. Please, I beg for your forgiveness.”

I did my best to display a pathetic expression.

It was obvious what was going on in your head, Demon Lord.

You had won and I had lost. The positions were suddenly switched. The Demon Lord who was pretending to be the loser until now was finally able to reverse the situation.

You’re probably thrilled and excited. It’s clear that you’ll want to enjoy this as much as you can. To take delight in your victory by humiliating me as you please.

“I was dull and foolish. I apologize, honorable Demon Lord! Please feel pity for this lowly human and grant me mercy! I will never step foot in your honor’s territory ever again……!”

I slammed my forehead against the floor repetitively.

I didn’t care if this method was loud and pathetic. It was better if it was noisy. The most important part was to satisfy the other person’s pride. Sure enough, the Demon Lord grinned.

“I see. If you wish to apologize then do so by cutting

off your own hand.”

“M-My hand?”

“Yes. Do so and I will let you live. I won’t cut your arms or legs off either.”

The Demon Lord chuckled.

“Think carefully. In truth, I’m the one at a loss in this trade.”

It was the exact words that I had tossed in ridicule at the Demon Lord before. Those words came right back at me like an arrow. I grinded my teeth.

But this was a chance. I would be able to take out a weapon without having to worry about drawing suspicion.

“Of course. I will more than gladly cut my hand. Thank you for forgiving me. Thank you very much, honorable Demon Lord…….”

I took out the dagger that was attached to my hip.

While lifting up the dagger in the air as if to bring it down onto my hand, I stood up just like that and charged at the Demon Lord.

You naively showed an opening, Demon Lord Dantalian!

“Haaaaaaaaaaa!”

I ran while crying out. I’m sorry to say but I’m gifted

at controlling people's psychology. It's your own fault for getting overconfident and lowering your guard just because you were so close to winning.

The Demon Lord may have been holding a long sword, but it was too late to get into a proper stance. The golem behind me probably won't make it on time. Even if the front or the back moves, I'll be the first to stab this blade into the damn Demon Lord!

I put more spirit into my body and thrust my dagger forward and—

My body staggered right before I could reach him.

“Uhiik!?”

I ended up letting out a questionable noise. My foot had suddenly stopped. When I looked down I saw a bluish slime wrapped around my right foot.

I was unable to withstand the momentum I was running with a second ago and fell forward. I groaned as I desperately tried to take my foot out of the slime. It wouldn't budge.

1 second, 2 second had passed before my mind started catching up to what had happened. Since when did he prepare something like a slime? Don't tell me, from the very beginning? Are you telling me that he knew from the start that I was pretending to surrender?

Then, something large crushed my body.

“Kuuuuh!”

The golem had slammed its fist down onto my lower body. My legs were obviously destroyed and my waist along with them. I could vividly feel the sensation of my bones breaking. The intense pain made everything in front of me start to blur and fade.

Something was flowing out of me. Was it my blood? It could possibly be my innards. Whatever it was, this was my end. I had never experienced something like dying before, but for some reason I had the strong feeling of ‘I will die here’.

“Damn, it…….”

I vomited blood. I couldn’t even muster the strength to talk. A blurry shadow came into my fading vision. The shadow moved, then, a blade stabbed into my throat.

To make sure that I was dead at this point.

Isn’t that a bit too much for a life that was already destined to die?

Before everything went dark I was able to see the other person’s face for just a moment. The man was looking down at me and smiling.

“—Go back to your mother’s womb and learn again, amateur.”



A devilish grin was there.

Is that so.

Is that what the race known as Demon Lords are.

Kuh. From the start, this was a monster that a low-class adventurer like me should have never dared to go after. It was us who were the ones being hunted, not him. I had stupidly forgotten my position on the food chain…….

For an animal that was unable to recognize a predator, the only fate that laid in wait for them was death. I had vowed to never fight monsters in my life and live as a looter, but in the end I ended up facing the final of final monsters.

My vision was black. Even after death I'll probably be severely regretting my foolishness…….

□ *Weakest Demon Lord, Rank 71st, Dantalian*
Empire Calendar: Year 1505, Month 4, Day 4
Dantalian's Demon Lord Castle

“Haaaa.”

Once I made sure Riff was dead I let out a long sigh.

It was over. I toppled down and sat on the floor. It felt as if my extremely sensitive nerves had been put into a spa and were starting to melt. It was the aftereffect for running my brain on full throttle for 3 hours straight.

After receiving a mysterious survey in my email I was dropped into a different world. It was a shock that I had become a Demon Lord in a world where a hero was the protagonist, but to also discover that I was the weakest Demon Lord, Dantalian. Without being able to properly figure out what was going on, I had to face a group of adventurers and was eventually able to kill

them all.

This all happened in 3 hours. It was obvious that my brain would be so exhausted. Thank you for going through the effort, my pretty brain. You worked to the point that some brain cells most likely evaporated.

【1. Annihilate the adventurers like this.】

【2. Be taken by the adventurers like this.】

The words that were lying in the corner of my view shined brightly.

The letters broke apart into little white particles and then formed different lines.

【A cruel and merciless decision!】

【Infamy increased slightly.】

“Not a cruel decision but a wise decision.”

I blurted out in rebuttal.

Then how else was I supposed to deal with a gang of people who had invaded with the intention to kill me? Were we supposed to grab each others’ hands and sing songs about how we’re all one? What an unfunny joke.

【Tutorial Clear!】

The sound of a victory horn rang loudly.
A row of notification windows appeared in mid-air.

【You will receive a difficulty bonus.】

【LUNATIC——You will receive the highest bonus.】

【S-Grade privileges will be selectable.】

【Please select a privilege.】

【※Warning: The systems automatically presented during the tutorial will not be accessible after this point. If there is a system that you really want to keep then please select it in the privileges.】

That's kind of you.

So it meant that things like being able to see the Demon Lord Castle's status, seeing other people's stats, and showing your affection rate with other people were given as a service only during the tutorial.

It was a sampler. To test out all the systems first and then later decide which one you need the most.

A list of all the privileges appeared in front of me.

Nest Building Demon Lord(S) Observe the state of the castle and extend it.
Zeus's Eagle(S) No matter what terrain, be able to see a real-time map.
Cronus's Heritage(S) Every 10 years you are able to save your progress.
Aphrodite's Apostle(S) Be able to see the affection rate of other people.
Athena's Apostle(S) Your leadership ability goes up to Great Hero rank.
Ares's Apostle(S) Your might ability goes up to Great Hero rank.
Apollon's Apostle(S) Your intelligence ability goes up to Great Hero rank.
Demeter's Apostle(S) Your politics ability goes up to Great Hero rank.
Hermes's Apostle(S) Your charm ability goes up to Great Hero rank.
Hephaestus' Apostle(S) Your technique ability goes up to Great Hero rank.
Dionysus's Foot(S) All saintesses in every shrine worships you.
Poseidon's Arm(S) 50 highest-class aquatic demons obey you.
Hera's Ear(S) You can understand and use every demon language.
Hade's Eye(S) You gain an exclusive storage for your items and money.
Prometheus's Hand(S) You can hire and summon monsters whenever you desire.

“Wow. That sure is a lot…….”

I looked through the list with bleary eyes.

The desire to fall over and take a nap weighed down on me heavily.

I originally wasn't a sincere human. I was someone who revered being lazy. Can't you tell by the fact that I had moved to some remote neighborhood and spent my days just playing computer games as soon as my father

had passed away? I worked too much today!

“Uh, I guess... yeah. Let’s go with Aphrodite’s Apostle.”

I spoke as if I was trying to shoo away a friend who kept bothering me.

Being able to see the cave map was probably Zeus’s Eagle, being able to move money in and out of the vault whenever I wanted to was probably Hade’s Eye, and being able to freely summon monsters was probably Prometheus’s Hand. All of these were tempting.

However, the most cheat like skill amongst these was the ability to read other people’s minds and check affection rate. To be able to read minds. If you combined my acting skills and the ability to read minds, then I didn’t have to ever worry about going somewhere and starving to death.

【You have chosen a privilege.】

【Your stats will be distributed according to how you cleared the tutorial.】

Okay, okay.

Was it over now?

I was already leaning back against the golem. The

golem's body was made of stone and yet it was strangely warm. It was acceptable to use as a bed.

Mr. Golem, I'm sorry but I'll be using your body as a bed for a bit.

“■■, ■■■.....”

The golem let out a soft grumble. I don't know what he had said but the meaning got across. Make use of me whenever you please, should be a decent translation of what it had said.

A demon who's gentle to their master but merciless to adventurers. How cool. I almost fell for you. The golem's body really was warm. As if sleep would envelop me immediately.....

What this place was.

Why this place had a similar universe to Dungeon Attack.

How systems that normally only appeared in games appeared here.

There was no way to answer these questions in my current situation. Regardless, I can clearly state what will happen from now on.

I plan to lay around and sleep all day.

Name Dantalian
Race Demon Lord
Job Monarch(F)
Reputation Failed Scholar



Leadership C rank Might F rank Intelligence A rank
Politics S rank Charm C rank Technique F rank

Title None
Abilities Eloquence SS,
Speech S, Acting S
Skills Aphrodite's Apostle(S)

[Achievements: Zero]

**DUNGEON
DEFENSE**



第 3 話

얼굴 없는
질병

Faceless Disease

A memory from long ago.

It was around the time I had started elementary school.

“Father. Why didn’t you marry only one girl?”

At that time I had learned that monogamy was common sense in nearly every country. Our country was the same. In other words, it meant that my growing environment being unusual was confirmed on a national level.

“Son. You probably won’t understand, but there are good women around the world, albeit rare. And even more rare than that are good men. If a good woman and a good man were to meet, then it’s inevitable that they’ll have sex.”

My father declared shamelessly.

As he always would.

“Oh? So for father, you were able to meet 5 of those so-called ‘rare good women’?”

“That’s because I did a lot of good things in my past life.”

“Maybe I should try believing in Allah next time.”

During that time, I would go to church every week and would constantly pray for lightning to strike down upon my father’s head. I’m not sure why, but my father was still fine. Perhaps it was because God was running an international business. He didn’t think the desperate plea of an 8-year-old child was important. Thus I decided to not get involved in God’s business industry.

Give and take.

There was always a background for the reason why I had become an athiest.

“My shrewd son. Keep in mind your father’s words.”

“Although I think that the reason why my personality became so rotten is 80% your fault, father. What is it?”

“If you’re lucky then you will meet good women. You’ll know they’re good just by looking at them. No matter what you do. Never. Never let those women go.”

“Couldn’t you have at least used the singular term

instead of the plural, father? Thanks to that all I hear is a very trash-like statement.”

“Trash, huh…… oh well. Son. Be prepared beforehand. No matter what you choose, you will live a life more harsh than I.”

“Why would I? My personality is already more mature than you, father.”

“Because you’re more competent than I am.”

He raised the corners of his mouth.

“People who are overly competent won’t marry just anyone. In the end, they’ll search for a companion who can understand them. The only person capable of understanding a competent man is an equally competent woman. Then what will happen?”

My father raised an index finger.

“Since two competent people are together they’ll most likely achieve great things. Once you reach a higher position, you’ll end up meeting another woman as competent as you are. You’ll be able to understand one another and then it’ll become 3 people together.”

He raised his middle finger.

“Now that there’s 3 you’ll get to an even higher position. Once at the top you’ll take a look around and find another competent woman. Now there’s 4. And

before you know it, it'll increase to 5."

He finally lifted up his ring finger and pinky.

I was dumbfounded and retorted back.

".....In my entire life, I had never heard nonsense as nonsensical as this. I thought it was impossible for pregnancy to happen between a dog and a human, but when I look at you, father, I worry that I might be the one to have gotten past that impossible barrier as a miracle and was born."

"You are more of a Devil than I am. This dad of yours' limit was 4 women. That's as far as I could get. Regardless, I look forward to see how far up you'll go."

"Garbage of a father, I will not go out with anyone—"

I looked him straight in the eyes.

"And even if I do end up doing so, I will only date a single person. I will never do something like cheat and hurt the person that is important to me."

"That's not a surprise, coming from you."

He grinned.

Annoyingly.

Even as his son, it was a cool smile.

□ *Weakest Demon Lord, Rank 71st, Dantalian*
Empire Calendar: Year 1505, Month 4, Day 18
Dantalian's Demon Lord Castle

Life was beautiful.

To the point that the people who think themselves as nihilistic should admit as well that life was so beautiful.

Following the setting in Dungeon Attack, Demon Lords are a clump of magical energy. All bodily functions are handled by magic. In other words, if you don't eat or sleep, thanks to the magical energy, your mind will still be fully active.

There was no problem even if I rolled around on my bed for 4 days straight.

I didn't even have to work for food.

Isn't this the very life that NEETs all around the world had dreamed for?

I'd like to borrow this position and make a declaration.

Demon Lords are the best.

Demon Lords, hooray.

Here's to you, Demon Lords

".....Your highness, Dantalian."

There was a time I had actually thought all that.

I turned my head slowly because of the abrupt voice.

I was currently lying down on my bed, so if I wanted to turn my head then I had to flip my entire body as well. It was an incredible amount of wasted energy. As if I was looking at the Minister of Environment who had just finished reading the report on electricity consumption during the summer, I looked at the person with an accursed gaze.

"Why are you calling me?"

"Today is the deadline. This time, no matter what, I will have your highness pay back the debt and interest."

There a female, who wore her hair in two braids, stood.

She looked around the age of a girl who had just graduated high school. Not matching her outer appearance, her face was incredibly void of emotions. Like a straggler returning from war would often be like,

the girl looked as if she had long ago burned off all the fuel that was in the thing called emotions.

Should I call it dryasdust?

That was this girl's normal expression. It had been half a month since I had first met her, but I had never witnessed something even remotely close to a smile from her. I'm starting to suspect that she has some sort of illness. Perhaps forever-on-her-period syndrome. That sounded like a sickness that existed.

The girl spoke.

"The 100 Libra that your highness had borrowed three months ago. If your highness includes this months' interest, then the interest alone is a total of 96 Libra. This one is here to receive 196 Libra from your highness."

"I'm saying it again, but I have never borrowed money from you."

I dug the inside of my nose with my pinky.

"How am I supposed to repay money that I had never borrowed? Give up."

"That is wrong. Your highness has most definitely received a loan from the Keuncuska Firm. Please look at this bond of debt. Your highness' thumbprint is certainly here."

The girl took out a scroll parchment from her bag.

In a vintage handwriting, a contract was written on the parchment.

IOU

100 Libra Coins (40% interest every month)

Rank 71st, Demon Lord Dantalian, has been loaned the above written amount of gold.

The interest must be paid on the 10th of every month, and the principal is due by Year 1505, Month 4, Day 11th. In the case that the interest is overdue, the creditor may at anytime demand all of the principal and interest. The debtor, Demon Lord Dantalian, during that time shall not display opposition.

Year 1505, Month 2, Day 1

*Rank 71st, Nameless Demon Lord, Dantalian
Keuncuska Firm, Exclusive Consultant, Lapis Lazuli*

Hereby vow to Hermes and Hades.

“As you can see.”

The girl displayed to me the parchment and spoke

methodically.

“The deadline date was originally the 11th of this month. A week has already passed. Your highness had requested for us to delay it for a week. Your highness. The time limit is up.

“Did I— do that—. I don’t remember—.”

“It is of no use to feign ignorance.”

I was going to pretend to be indifferent but this girl sternly cut me off.

“I can not delay the deadline any further.”

“Can you not push it back another week?”

“That is impossible.”

Immediate response.

“Didn’t your highness say the same thing last time? Delaying the deadline may be possible once, but two times in a row will not be allowed.”

A spiteful girl.

She was the type of person who could kill someone without blinking.



A week ago.

This girl had suddenly visited my castle while

introducing herself as an employee of some firm. These type of guests were usually unwelcomed back in my original world, and sure enough, she had abruptly pushed a debt bill on me and pressured me to pay up.

“A debt……?”

“That is correct, your highness.”

The girl lowered her head and bowed. It was like she was a veteran maid. Her every movement was well-disciplined.

Except the fact that I couldn't even feel the least bit of respect towards me. She gave off the feeling that she had only bowed because greetings were a core part in social interactions.

Well, I was only a Demon Lord in name. I was still something that would compare to a ricefish⁷⁾, Dantalian. I'm grateful she displayed even the smallest bit of etiquette towards me, on the contrary, I should be the one that should be bowing. I had no complaints.

“Your highness had taken a loan of 100 Libra from our firm, Keuncuska, around this time two months ago. Since the day to pay the interest has arrived, this lowly

7) TL note: Most of these species are quite small, making them of interest for aquaria. Most are less than a fifth this length, with the smallest being only 1.7 cm (0.67 in) long.

one has come in person to meet your highness.”

“My god…….”

I closed my eyes tightly.

I didn’t think that Demon Lord Dantalian’s position could get any worst than this, but it seems that I had been overly optimistic.

I had put my life on the line and was able to repel the adventurers but now a personal moneylending business had arrived at my doorsteps. Economic aggression after an armed protest. It was an actual standard colonial policy. It was admirable. If need be, I wanted to applaud this clean diplomatic method. If the person directly involved wasn’t me, that is. Fucking hell.

“Your highness?”

While I was up to my neck with despair, the girl had tilted her head. She most likely had been an acquaintance of Dantlian for quite a while now. She might notice that I was suddenly acting strange compared to before.

For now, in order to figure out the person’s name, I muttered in my head.

‘Status.’

Name	Stamina	Attack	Defense	Affection
Lapis Lazuli	E	D	F	0

So her name was Lapis Lazuli.

I composed myself to have a serious expression. It would be fitting to lie from here on. Since the affection was at 0, it'd only be appropriate to speak a bit coldly to her.

“Lazuli. There’s a secret that I must tell you.”

“.....”

Eh?

I don’t know why, but the girl had slightly raised her eyes. It seemed like she was surprised by what I had said. I didn’t really say anything strange yet, and yet her reaction was weird.

“What’s the matter?”

“My apologies. This one had never expected in their wildest dreams that your highness would remember this one’s name. Normally, your highness would refer to this one as crossbreed, low-life, larva, or prostitute.....”

Dantalian was a piece of trash that went beyond expectation.

I cleared my throat and changed the subject.

“Ehem. Bearing that in mind, this is an issue which involves that as well. You may not know this, but exactly one week ago a group of adventurers had

invaded here. While I was retaliating against said adventurers I had hit my head against the ground. Then what do you know. I found out that I had lost parts of my memory.”

I then pointed at my leg.

“My leg was also seriously injured and had only just recently healed a couple of days ago. If things went wrong then I would have died. Honestly speaking, other than knowing that your name is Lapis Lazuli, everything else is rather fuzzy and vague.”

“.....Is that so.”

Lapis Lazuli gazed at me with eyes containing suspicion.

Of course, there was no way she would easily believe the words of a man who had suddenly claimed to have lost his memories. Nevertheless, I stayed brazen. For a moment, an atmosphere as if we were trying to analyze one another flowed.

It seemed Lapis Lazuli had understood in her own way and bowed her head once again.

“To serve your highness would be a privilege for this one. If there is anything that this one can do to help your highness, then say so and this one shall do her utmost to help.

“Good. Then I’d like to request something immediately.”

“Yes.”

“.....Could you possibly delay the deadline a bit.”

Lapis Lazuli blinked.

“Pardon?”

“I currently do not have the money on me. I will most definitely pay within this week, so please grant me a bit more time. Okay? I beg of you.”

“.....”

Her gaze became cold.

Ten to one, she had most likely misunderstood and assumed that I had claimed to have lost my memories in order to delay the deadline. Sadly, I did not have the ability to fix the misunderstanding.....

Lapis Lazuli was a level-headed woman.

If I was allowed to be more subjective, then she was a devilish woman. She did not consent to delaying the deadline by even a week. Despite my plea, she only gave me 2 days.

From that day on for a week, I played a game of cat and mouse with that loan shark.

On the first day.

“Your highness. The interest has already been pushed back by two months. The original loan was 100 Libra, but the interest alone is already at 96 Libra. Please make your payment.”

“In the first place, is it not ridiculous that the compound interest is 40% every month!? That’s excessively expensive!”

I exclaimed while walking down one of the cavern paths.

In one corner of the cave there was an underground lake. Interestingly, the lake was heated just like a spa. My hobby was to go there every day and spend my time peacefully enjoying the heat of the water enveloping my body. However, that moneylender had solved her lodging problem in this cave and kept bothering me. Thanks to that, I couldn’t properly enjoy my simple hobby.

“Keuncuska Firm or whatever they’re called, I’ll make a formal complaint! This kind of interest rate is both economically and logically an evil influence to this society!”

“That is why this one had warned your highness since the beginning. That, unless it was a desperate situation, to never borrow money from our Keuncuska Firm. But the one to had kept pushing for the loan two months

ago was none other than your highness, Dantalian.”

“No. That wasn’t me who borrowed that money……!”

I clenched my teeth and roared.

Why did I have to pay back the money that someone else had borrowed?

It was irrational. Ah, irrational beyond measure. Life being beautiful was, as expected, a delusion. Life was dirty and cheap. I cursed at my fate of possessing a Demon Lord.

Demon Lords were the worst.

Demon Lords die.

“I apologize, but this one does not understand what your highness means.”

“I’m saying that it was some half-wit named Dantalian that had taken that loan……!”

Lapis Lazuli looked this way as if she was looking at something rotten.

Isn’t your highness that Dantalian, is what her eyes were asking me. Yes. People other than myself probably wouldn’t be able to understand what I meant. That was obvious…….

“If it truly is too difficult, then there is also the option to declare bankruptcy.”

“I have to be concerned about bankruptcy right from

the start, huh. Ahaha.”

Hello, people of the nation.

This is exemplary citizen turned Demon Lord.

When talking about Demon Lords, you’d think they’d command an army of demons and mercilessly devastate humans, but for some reason I seemed to have absolutely nothing.

I thought it was unfair that I had almost died to adventurers as soon as I had opened my eyes, but to now also tell me that I had to repay a debt? Where should I go to deal with this unfairness? The cops? Court? Or maybe a mental hospital?

I just wanted to comfortably live the remainder of my life as a NEET in the corner of my house. Peacefully. Without causing any fuss. Were you blocking me off from even this small desire? Was the world messing with me?

I wanted to kill myself…….

“Your highness. It is not embarrassing to not have the ability to pay back the loan. However, the thing that is embarrassing is the attitude of trying not to repay the debt. What does your highness mean by having lost your highness’ memories? How could a great Demon Lord, like your highness, resort to such a childish excuse.”

“I really am going through partial memory lost!”

“……Haaa. Of course.”

“You really do have the knack of making people upset, huh!?”

The corners of my mouth twitched.

“Anyways, give me a week. Just a week. Once a week has passed I will do whatever you tell me to.”

“This one shall wait one more day.”

“So frugal……!”

Second day.

It was morning and as I was getting up from my bed, as if she had been waiting for me, Lapis Lazuli entered the room. I should add that I had the habit of sleeping naked.

Based on a logical conclusion, when Lapis Lazuli had invaded my quarters, I was sporting a new fashion style of not even wearing my underwear. Thus, as soon as I saw her I had let out a scream.

“Get out! I said get out!”

“Your highness. The interest…….”

“I’m not wearing anything below right now!”

“That is fine. This one does not care for your highness’ body.”

“I care!”

With all my strength I threw a pillow at her.

Lapis Lazuli didn’t even move an inch and allowed herself to be hit. Of course, the attack didn’t work. Her face was still calm and emotionless.

“This one will say it again, but declaring bankruptcy is also a fine idea. If your highness can’t possibly pay off the debt then please do put into consideration this option.”

“……I’ll hear you out.”

I spoke while slowly getting dressed.

I was getting a headache by this loan shark.

“What will happen if I declare bankruptcy?”

“For starters, our firm will claim all rights to the Demon Lord castle.”

They’ll seize my home.

A beautiful hell of a life was already being spread before me.

“After that, our firm will make a **few requests** to your highness. All your highness has to do is oblige.”

“So I’ll be downgraded to your firm’s puppet…….”

“My apologies, but that is so.”

I had done this kind of work before, so I knew well about it.

Like a large company supporting a poor politician and using them as a chess-piece. In this world, it was a big firm taking advantage of a Demon Lord in poverty.

“Look around, Lazuli. I am a Demon Lord with nothing.”

I told her earnestly.

“It wouldn’t even be fun to use me as a puppet.”

“That is alright. There’s an infinite amount of economical uses by just being a Demon Lord. Our firm executives are putting a lot of expectations on your highness, Dantalian.”

“You really are quite honest!”

“Unfortunately, the only product that your highness can purchase from this one is honesty.”

But you don’t have anything so you can’t buy anything, anyways.

Was the nuance that she had plainly put into her words.

I disliked her.

I really disliked her.

I disliked her to the point that I wanted to step on her foot.

“.....Your highness?”

“What is it?”

“Your highness is right now stepping on this one’s left foot.”

“I consider it a boast that my thoughts and actions line up.”

“It hurts.”

“You don’t look like you’re in pain.”

“I’m sorry. ……But I actually feel more pleasure from it.”

“Were you perhaps a pervert!?”

“Despite this one’s looks, there is succubus mixed into this one’s blood.”

“Was it not you who stated that all succubus being perverts was just a bias last time we met! You yourself said it!”

“Please throw away the bias that all biases are nothing but bias.”

“Why are you the one acting high and mighty……!”

“I’m sorry, but I’m actually a very competent person.”

“Annoying! You’re seriously annoying!”

“I am a half-breed of a human and a succubus. My birth is so low that I am considered an untouchability. Born an orphan, I roamed the bottom of the streets for 20 years. However, I was able to succeed in life with my ability alone. Now I am currently a white-collar worker

for the biggest firm in the demon continent, Keuncuska. Adding to that, I am now here with your highness Dantalian as your exclusive consultant.”

“You really are competent……!?”

“That is correct. It is on a completely different level to your highness who was born a Demon Lord. But also, your highness is a Demon Lord and is yet to have achieved anything, but this one was able to climb up this far by her power alone.”

“You’re competent but as expected you’re annoying as well! What’s with that.”

“My apologies. Since this one is always honest to your highness.”

“If that’s honesty, then the world is better off if everyone was a liar.”

I wonder why.

This person wasn’t insulting me but Dantalian, but for some reason I feel offended. The girl shooting spiteful remarks at me with no emotions stabbed into my chest.

“I will make myself clear now. I do not plan to become someone’s puppet.”

“Understood.”

Lapis Lazuli nodded.

“Then please pay the debt.”

“Sorry, but I don’t have money either. Tsk tsk, it’s quite the shame. I want to give you the money but it seems my pockets are empty so I can’t! Haha!

Ahahaha!”

“.....”

In truth, there was 80 Libra hidden under my bed in the Demon Lord’s Quarter.

That was the money that I had risked my life to take back from the adventurers. Like I’d give the money to some frugal forever-on-her-period succubus.

“Your highness. Do you truly have the will to pay back the debt?”

“Indeed. I’m a man who’s constantly burning with will. Aah, what a tragedy. I sincerely want to give you the money, but alas, since I am penniless I am unable to do anything. Restrictions. These restrictions.”

“Then work to pay it off.”

“.....Eh?”

Lapis Lazuli’s right hand glowed brightly.

A light pink magic circle formed for a moment before shortly after Lapis Lazuli was holding a pickaxe in her hand.

A pickaxe.

It was something you’d see a rough worker using in a

mine.

“.....Why are you giving this to me?”

“Does your highness not know? Compared to other areas, Demon Lord castles have a high concentration of magical energy. Perfectly, your highness’ castle is in the form of a cave, so if your highness picks any deposit and mines from it, then your highness should immediately get magic stones. Magic stones with a large amount of magical energy in them can sell for a very high price.”

“Are you perhaps telling me to become a miner and work?”

“Yes.”

“Are you serious.”

I unintentionally spoke with honorifics.

It was such a shock that I had forgotten for a moment that I was a Demon Lord.

“Did your highness not say that you were overflowing with will?”

Lapis Lazuli handed the pickaxe to me.

I stared blankly at the wooden stick with another iron stick attached to it.

“Now all your highness has to do is emit that will.”

“.....”

CLANG!

【You have extracted 1x Iron Ore.】

CLANG!

【You have extracted 1x Iron Ore.】

CLAANG!

【You have extracted 1x Iron Ore.】

CLANG.....

【You have extracted 1x Iron Ore.】

CLAAANG.....

And thus, on the third day.

I glared at Lapis Lazuli ferociously.

“—I declare bankruptcy.”

“But only one day has passed.”

“It was a miracle that I was able to last 30 minutes of manual labor!”

I tossed the pickaxe as far as I could.

My body was screaming because of my sore muscles. As a person who was aiming to become a peerless house corner dwelling NEET, a large amount of labor was too tough for me. There was also no profit. Even if I swung the pickaxe all day, the most money I could earn was merely a single silver coin.

“How could I continue to do something like this!”

“It was just that your highness was boasting so much that this one had high expectations.”

“Isn’t the efficiency the worst!? The efficiency! If I made 1 silver every day, then even if I worked for one whole month, all I’d make is 6 gold! The interest alone is about to be 80 Libra this month and that’s 10 times the amount I’d make. How do you expect me to waste my time mining!”⁸⁾

“.....”

Lapis Lazuli had abruptly stopped talking.

Her blue pupils had grown slightly bigger. For some reason, I think she was surprised at me. It was incredibly rare for Lapis Lazuli to show an emotion.

That was strange.

Nothing that I had said just now was weird. From what I could tell, a reason to be surprised didn’t exist either. I wonder why Lapis Lazuli, whose default was always void of emotions, was surprised.

“Why are you looking at me like that?”

“.....I’m sorry. This one did not expect that your highness would possibly be able to do simple mathematics. It was so unexpected that this one had

8) TL note: 5 silver = 1 gold, A gold coin is referred to as a Libra. Silver is just silver.

become speechless.”

It was an outrageous response that went beyond my imagination!

“Your highness’ deduction is correct. It would be difficult to repay the debt with just mining.”

“Yes. If it was you then I did not doubt that you would agree…… wait. If you knew that it would be difficult to repay the debt with that then why did you make me go mining in the first place?”

“This one does not understand what your highness’ is talking about. How could someone as lowly as myself possibly make a Demon Lord do something. All this one has done was gift a pickaxe to your highness.

“Oi, this bitch……?”

I looked at Lapis Lazuli with slanted eyes.

“Lazuli. This is the first time I’ve met a woman like yourself.”

“I do not deserve such high praise.”

“I’m not joking.”

A life over 20 years.

The only woman to have messed with me excluding my mother, was my second half little sister. Putting being a half-breed and an untouchability aside, it was amazing that Lapis Lazuli had still not fallen.

For example.

I was purposely treating Lapis Lazuli with affection. My goal was affection points. A Demon Lord like myself was treating a low status person like her equally. I had judged that this by itself would be enough to raise her affection considerably.

However, the results was a failure.

If I talked to her slyly, then she'd match me and responded slyly. If I tossed a joke at her, then she'd, with her emotionless face, would respond with a joke.

That was it.

She gave off the feeling that 'since a Demon Lord like myself wanted this kind of chatter, then it was only appropriate to humor me'. As a result, she didn't open herself up to me.

Like the need to greet in social interactions.

Lapis Lazuli treated me with only a dry and businesslike attitude.

.....And so, time passed helplessly.



Finally, today was the 7th day.

In order to see the results of my week worth of hard

work, I looked straight at Lapis Lazuli and muttered in my head.

‘Status’

Soon after, the other person’s stats appeared in mid-air.

Name	Stamina	Attack	Defense	Affection
Lapis Lazuli	E	D	F	2

“Haa…….”

A sigh came out on its own.

After defeating the party of adventurers I had lost access to all the systems.

I couldn’t see the status of the castle, I couldn’t see the map of the area, and I didn’t have the ability to withdraw and deposit my money as I pleased anymore. Except one thing, I still had access to the function to see the stats and affection of other people.

I could know if the other person truly had an interest towards me…… This was a precious skill. Especially for a person like me whose everything relied on acting and politics.

Lapis Lazuli’s affection was only 2.

If I did not have this ability, then I would have most

likely assumed that 'I've gotten on friendly terms with Lapis Lazuli now'. I wouldn't have been able to figure out what emotions lurked underneath that stoic face of hers.

But I was certain now.

This person had a frozen heart.

I was nothing more than an object of business to this succubus girl. The fact that the affection had barely gone up during this entire week proved that. She was a formidable girl.

To get close to her and then use her…… that original plan of mine was disposed of. It failed magnificently.

Regardless, it didn't mean that all my methods had vanished.

There was a method of handling people who moved with their heads instead of their hearts. I knew exactly what that was.

Except, it was one of the more drastic out of other drastic measures.

If you wanted to hunt a tiger then you had to take up the gun yourself and dive into the mountain. At worst, I had to be prepared to be torn apart by savage beasts. That mental attitude wasn't something you could simply order at a fast food restaurant and get moments later.

My own resolution.

If I don't kill them then I'll be the one to be killed, this kind of thinking was vital.

"Your highness."

Lapis Lazuli informed me calmly.

"If your highness does not repay the debt and interest or declare bankruptcy, then the Keuncuska firm will have no other choice but to take your highness' property and body by force."

"I am a Demon Lord. A person with one of the highest nobility amongst demons. Who could possibly forcefully capture this Demon Lord?"

"There are a countless number of supporters for the Keuncuska Firm. Amongst them, there are other Demon Lords like your highness. Rank 5th Demon Lord Marbas and Rank 9th Demon Lord Paimon are included."

The highest of Demon Lords.

They were people that a rank 71st like me couldn't possibly face.

"Our firm is famous for being merciless to debtors who fail to make their payments. In the past, there was an incident where Rank 25th Demon Lord Glasyalabolas received a loan of 20,000 Libra and did not pay back the interest for 2 years. At that time, our firm had hired

a small number of 9,000 mercenaries and left them in the command of Rank 12th Demon Lord Sitri. Your highness. Demon Lord Glasyalabolas could not even hold out for 3 weeks before surrendering.”

Lapis Lazuli let out a sigh.

“.....That is the Keuncuska Firm’s strength. It is rational violence. That is also the reason why our firm has been able to stay as the highest amongst demons for the past 500 years. Your highness Dantalian, this one is sincerely suggesting this. Please, declare bankruptcy a day sooner.”

I pushed down the sheets of my bed.

“.....”

It was fine.

I could still win.

If things goes as planned, then I could rip this girl in front of me apart and make her mine.

I firmed my resolve and—
slowly, opened my mouth.

“Lazuli. I will give you a proposal that will most definitely benefit you.”

“Yes, your highness. Please tell this one anything.”

“Seeing as it has already come to this, I shall borrow more money from that firm of yours.”

Lapis Lazuli narrowed her brows.

Even if she were to hear that the world was going to be destroyed, she would probably respond to that by saying, ‘Let it be destroyed in a single moment’. For that Lapis Lazuli to narrow her brows was a huge gesture.

“This one objects.”

Her voice became a level drier.

“Your highness Dantalian already has a debt. But it is still okay. If your highness works hard for a while then your highness could more than likely pay it all off. However, if your highness receives more of a loan here…….”

“Then I’ll fall further into a swamp pit.”

I smiled.

“That’s what I want.”

“Pardon?”

“Lapis Lazuli. Let us not be prudish and speak honestly.”

I held a soft smile on my lips.

“Even if you claim to be my exclusive consultant, you are still a pawn for the Keuncuska Firm. Profit for your firm will, in the end, become profit for you as well.”

According to her, Demon Lords had more than enough political uses.

To succeed in turning that figure into a puppet for the firm, Lapis Lazuli will most likely receive high praise from the executives. She will advance up faster than anyone else. To take a step, no, 20 steps, ahead of other competition.

“.....”

The mixed blood succubus still had a poker face.

Was she perhaps pretending to not know what I was talking about.

“Wouldn’t myself not being able to pay the debt off be a profit to you?”

“That is a misunderstanding. This one has always, for your highness.....”

“I know full well of the habits of a merchant.”

If the other person tried to make an excuse then shift the topic.

We were not fighting with weapons, but with our words. I had to attack fiercely. There was no need to listen to the other person’s useless excuses.

“Since olden times, merchants did not invest into things that wouldn’t give them profit. However, for some reason, the Keuncuska Firm had loaned me 100 Libra...”

The fact that Dantalian was incompetent was already obvious to the world.

Even if they loaned him money, there was a zero to none chance of getting anything back. It didn't make sense. It was like a bank giving millions of won to a credit defaulter.

This meant that they didn't plan to collect the money in the first place.

"To put a dog collar on me."

I grinned.

"To turn me into a puppet with the debt as a pretext. From the beginning, this was your firm's goal. Am I wrong?"

"....."

"You said it before. That if it was too difficult then that I had 'the option' to declare bankruptcy. But in your mind, you honestly wanted to say this."

That bankruptcy was my **only option**.

A choice never existed from the get go.

The loan itself was a trap, and two months ago, the Demon Lord Dantalian got caught in it stupidly.

Now, deadpan succubus. Go on and respond.

You're like a mountain fortress. Since it was built on top of a rugged mountain, it was a wall that was difficult to conquer. It was something annoying for invaders to even approach.

Regardless, if the fortress was sieged then it was over.
I will not give you a path to escape. I'll capture your
fortress in an instant.....

□ *Keuncuska Merchant, Mixed Blood, Lapis Lazuli*
Empire Calendar: Year 1505, Month 4, Day 18
Keuncuska Firm Office

Demon Lord Dantalian was smiling before my eyes.

.....Honestly confessing, I underestimated him.

It had been 1 year since I had become Demon Lord Dantalian's exclusive consultant.

I had thought he was a good for nothing piece of trash, but it seems I was mistaken. Truthfully, I was surprised. The intimidating sharp look in his eyes and his gaze looking this way as if he was testing me.

His pupils were as dark as a well.

I couldn't see the bottom..... that was the natural feeling I got. Was Dantalian always this kind of character?

Someone who got lucky and was born as a Demon

Lord and thus lived a lazy and sleazy life. At most, that was all I thought he was…….

‘Ah’

For the first time, I realized my mistake.

Because of the unexpected blow I had taken, I had unintentionally stopped talking.

To make such a mistake. To be silent here meant that I was admitting that he was correct. I had to change the topic.

“Let us assume that what your highness has inferred is correct.”

“I do not want to know about hypotheses. What I want to know is the simple truth.”

……Are you not even giving me a corner to escape to.

The back of my neck felt cold.

Demon Lord Dantalian had most certainly changed.

Half a month ago, Dantalian was being threatened by a group of adventurers. Conveniently, it was a group of adventurers with a map of the Demon Lord castle. They may have been a group of adventurers on the same level as a small vigilante group in some far off mountain valley, but Demon Lord Dantalian was in a serious situation…… was that it? Does experiencing near death really change people so drastically?

Dantalian was a Demon Lord that I was in charge of. If that person was to become competent then unmistakably it was a situation that I should be welcoming with open arms. But honestly, it was hard to be happy.

I wanted a Demon Lord on the level of a fox. I did not want a Demon Lord on the level of a tiger. It would be troubling if the puppet was to become too clever. Who could have expected for this to happen.

The Demon Lord gazed at me hard.

“Lala. Go to the Keuncuska Firm and tell them.”

Lala?

I blinked.

“Lapis Lazuli shortened to Lala. It’s a suitable nickname.”

“……Is your highness giving a lowly one such as myself a nickname?”

“Do you not like it?”

“This one is only grateful.”

The demon world was strictly a hierarchical society.

Even if the race was the same, if the tribes were different then your status was different as well. If there were some orcs that were considered to be nobles, then there were also orcs that were treated as slaves. If one

were to try and figure out each and every of the ranks that existed then they'd have to go through hundreds, if not thousands of tribes and races.

I was an untouchability. A half-breed of a succubus and a human. Succubus already received scorn as being a race of prostitutes. But amongst those, the person to be born between one and a vulgar human, was none other than myself..... Thus I was a crossbreed.

A leprosy of society.

I could not dare to come in contact with other people with this filthy body. By chance, if I were to even touch a person of a higher status than myself then I would have to cut off a finger, if I were to enter a temple then my toes would be severed, and if I were to even recite a scripture from one of the Gods then my tongue would be sliced.

That was why, when Demon Lord Dantalian had stepped on my foot I became nervous. Thankfully, it was shrugged off as a joke, but if someone else had seen this then my foot would have had to been cut off. Now looking back at it, that was most likely Dantalian's way of threatening me.

As expected, I had to go along with the Demon Lord's rhythm here.

I shall lower my head at once.

“What is the message that this one should deliver to the firm?”

“Demon Lord Dantalian has finally gone mad. Because he did not have anyone else to rely on he had entrusted his mind and body to you, a succubus. You, making full use of your charm, was able to successfully entice the Demon Lord.”

“.....”

What were his intentions.

I couldn't grasp what was going on in his head. However, even if I honestly spoke my mind about how foolish of an idea that was, I'd probably be pushed back in the battle of vigor. For now, I will respond as if I understood completely and as if that sounded like an interesting idea. There were times where an empty boast was a valid tactic.

“So. A mere peasant such as this one will become your highness' concubine……? That is an interesting story.”

“Since long ago, there was nothing more romantic than the story of a prince falling in love with a peasant. It is a story that goes over big regardless of what time period it is told in. Tell your firm executives that I am so head over heels for you that it seems like I won't be able to

get out.”

“That is quite the part being given to this one. That is more than this one deserves.”

“Aah. Dantalian, doing whatever he can for money, started to spout nonsense. He claims that a disease will spread within two months, and that he knows what the cure for that disease is. That he’ll monopolize the ingredients to the cure before the plague spreads and he’ll be able to gain a fortune. Tell the firm that I wish to gain another loan with that statement.”

“.....”

I see.

I was able to understand just barely.

Right now, Dantalian was setting himself up to be a clown. A Demon Lord who fell for a mere succubus. Adding to that, in order to gain another loan he made up a ridiculous lie.....

“The loan amount then, huh. About 10,000 gold coins should suffice.”

“To say 10,000 gold coins.....”

It was an amount that couldn’t be paid off even if he worked for 130 years.

If you included the interest, then it was an even more distant sum.

The firm executives would probably welcome it with open arms.

That was obvious. The larger the debt, then the stronger the collar on Dantalian's neck would become. It was like a Demon Lord making a mad dash straight into a trap to self-destruct.

I'd be the very person to have lured the Demon Lord to his own destruction in this comedy, thus gaining an incredible amount of merits. No matter how low my status was, people could not ignore my contribution. At once, I'd become a candidate to become an executive for the firm.

"How about it? Does this much attract your interest?"

"Yes."

A sweet offer.

No matter how you looked at it, it was an opportunity to gain an enormous amount of profit.

.....It was so tempting that I felt more suspicion from it.

Where would Dantalian get any benefit from this? This was a story only good for me. I didn't expect him to give me a proper response, but I should ask him for now.

"Your highness. This one does not understand. Where

does your highness plan to gain profit from this grand play?"

"You are a merchant."

His highness Dantalian responded calmly.

"Merchants thoroughly check if there's profit to be gained and if there is, then they'll dash for it. If you see profit in my offer, then shouldn't you be taking it with no questions asked?"

"Your highness is correct. However, to be cautious in front of game that appears excessively appetizing, is also a proper merchant's attitude. If this one had woken up one morning and was told that a fox was sprawled out at the front door, then that would be hard to believe."

Upon saying that, his highness grinned.

"Why not? The fox could have fallen for you at first sight."

"....."

He was smooth.

His talking ability wasn't on an average level.

Even if he had been at death's doors before, was it possible for a person to change this much? It was strange. From a common sense point of view, this was incomprehensible.

"Lala. When a hunter is catching a fox, there are no

cases where the hunter shows consideration for the fox's feelings. That would be laughable. As a hunter, what you have to do is simple. First, take out a crossbow——”

His highness Dantalian moved his hands.

As if there really was a crossbow there.

“Go after the fox with the resolve to kill. If you fumble the shot then you will only startle it and cause it to flee. Aim exactly at the center of their forehead. And then…….”

The invisible bolt on the crossbow was aimed at my forehead.

His highness Dantalian pulled the trigger.

“Bang.”

Playfully, he fired.

“Splendidly finish it off in one hit.”

“…….”

“Go to the firm right away and tell them. That Dantalian has finally gone insane. That it's the golden opportunity to forever bind that pathetic Demon Lord.”

His highness Dantalian lightly patted my shoulder.

A corner of my mind felt uneasy. On one hand, my rationality was saying that his highness was correct, but on the other hand, my heart was throwing up red flags.

This was a trap.

A cruel snare was placed before me.

If I put my foot forward thoughtlessly then it could be my end.

.....Whenever my mind and heart reacted separately I would always follow the former. The problem was this situation, my heart was pounding at an unprecedented speed.

Pushing down the ominous foreboding feeling.

I moved my lips.

“Your highness. This one only fears this one situation. Namely, the game that this one had thought to be a fox had turned out to be a tiger. One arrow is not enough to catch a tiger.”

“Well. Then I guess you can only get eaten by the tiger at that point.”

His highness Dantalian put out his right hand.

Not understanding what that hand gesture meant, I stared blankly.

His highness, thinking it was helpless, smiled wryly.

“How long do you plan to leave my hand by itself like this?”

“.....”

At last, I realized that his highness was requesting for a handshake.

To ask for a handshake. I did not know how to respond.

I had never held someone's hand before up until now. The fact that our feet had touched was still excusable, but if our hands were to touch then that would be a clear crime.

“.....A person of obscure birth such as this one could not dare dirty the hands of your highness.”

His highness Dantalian most likely knew this as well.

He was a person who had held a peerless amount of pride when it involved aristocratism, after all. He didn't even consider something like myself as a person. I didn't hold a personal grudge because of that. It would be stranger for a Demon Lord to not treat a succubus/human mixed blood like so.

I did not have a desire to sever my wrists.

“Pardon this one's opinion, but while this one is grateful, this one would only trouble your highness' dignity. Please withdraw your highness' hand.”

“What a strange place to be worried about losing face while discussing such a daring topic.”

His highness Dantalian chuckled.

“If you shake my hand then would my hand suddenly become defiled, make me catch a cold, and cause my

social status to drop? I merely wish to shake hands with the meaning of treating each other well from this point on.”

“Even if your highness were to now have a negative opinion of the hierarchical system, the majority of the people do not share that opinion. If a peasant such as this one were to come in contact with your highness’ body then upon this one a legal punishment will…….”

“Ooh. So are those ‘majority’ here?”

With exaggerated movements, his highness Dantalian takes a look around. Naturally, there were only his highness and myself, the two of us here.

“Demon Lord Dantalian is also a trash like person anyways. I am only a Demon Lord by name. I do not have anything at all. Lala. Do you still wish not to shake my hand?”

“…….”

Having said that much, I did not have the right to refuse.

Carefully, I reached out and touched his hand.

The first person’s hand that I had ever touched was cold. I furtively felt the touch of his palm. Upon doing so, his highness Dantalian grasped my hand tightly.

“Treat me well from now on.”

“.....Yes. Please treat this one well as well, your highness.”

It felt like it would be a long relationship.

I wasn't sure why, but my intuition told me so.



□ *Keuncuska Executive, Miser Goblin, Torukel*
Empire Calendar: Year 1505, Month 4, Day 20
Keuncuska Firm Headquarters, Conference Room

“For there to be a full assembly. Quite the rare occasion, keruk.”

An order had suddenly come from the firm headquarters for a full assembly.

Keuncuska executives were dispatched across the continent. I too had plans to go to Bataafse today to direct a fleet. This full assembly was clearly not scheduled.

To suddenly call for all the executives to gather…… it wasn’t an everyday occurrence. I had a bad feeling. Did something big happen somewhere, perhaps.

Concealing my anxious mind, I made my way to the headquarters. In a large meeting room all of the

executives were gathered.

“Keruruk.”

Still as usual, there were a bunch of rough mugs. Vampires, werewolves, lizardmen. It was quite the exhibition of races. ……Hm? In one corner of the conference room there was a girl that I had never seen before. Her hair was a light pink. Races with that hair color were rare.

It was then that I had made eye contact with that girl.

“Hm……!”

Unintentionally, I gulped.

The venomous eyes on her emotionless face were out of the ordinary. Those were eyes of a person who had killed before. And not only one or two people, but eyes that had killed a countless number of times. Thankfully, the time we exchanged glances was short. The girl had shortly after turned her head.

Keruk.

I didn’t know who she was, but this emergency assembly was probably called for because of her. Situations always precipitate because of unwelcomed guests. There was a girl I had never seen before here. I could easily analogize.

The executives were voicing their discontent.

“Now that Miser Torukel is also here, start the conference already.”

“Do you know how many pushed customers there are?”

“Yeah, that’s right. It’ll be bad if I can’t sell all of the dried herrings today.”

What impatient people.

Even I had plans to hold an audience with the merchants of Phrygia at the harbor. I had a fairly busy body. Time is essential for a merchant. Be it a meeting or whatever, start already. And if possible, end it soon.

“Well. Everyone calm down.”

The old vampire sitting in the upper seat calmed the executives.

“There is a reason why we have called for all of the executives to gather. We will not waste your time so do not worry.”

Ivar Lodbrok.

That old man with the splendidly grown white beard was our firm’s highest executive. He could be referred to as the actual person who was controlling the entire firm.

Fitting for a person known as vampire, he had lived for over 600 years. Although, I do have to say that he should crawl into his coffin and have his funeral carried

out already. He sure does live for a long time.

“Now then, Lapis Lazuli. Explain.”

“Yes, chief.”

The girl responded at the center of the conference room.

Lapis Lazuli?I had heard of that name before.

“It’s the fellow born with the cursed bloodline.”

“Why is something like that attending this executive conference?”

Several of the executives had recognized the identity of the girl. While creasing their brows they started to whisper among one another. They were openly displaying their discomfort.

Aah. I remembered. It was the kid who, despite being an untouchability, was able to successfully settle into our firm.

There was a time that a topic of a girl who had talent that surpassed her status was going around. Keruruk, so that girl was the main character of that dispute.

Certainly, her voice was clear. She was calm even though she was standing before this galaxy-like group of executives. It wasn’t normal courage, that was for certain.

“Chief, that isn’t even an executive candidate. Is that

not just an office clerk? What is this? There are limits to exceptions.”

“It is already unpleasant that I have to breathe the same air as a crossbreed.”

The executives poured out their complaints.

How idiotic.

The hierarchical system was nothing more than a useless antique. It was a tool that stupid nobles used to raise their even dumber sons and daughters. Despite that, do you scorn this untouchability. In the first place, us merchants already had low ranks... Tsk tsk, they were cutting off their nose to spite their face.

Ivar Lodbrok smiled bitterly.

“How about listening to what she has to say first. It is something profitable. Gold that’s been in a pig’s stomach and gold that has been dipped in holy water, they all have the same value……. Lapis Lazuli.”

“Yes. Demon Lord Dantalian has requested for a loan.”

Lapis Lazuli spoke calmly.

“Currently, Demon Lord Dantalian has a debt of 196 Libra. Even if he has to raise his debt further, he is planning to obtain a come from behind victory.”

“Hm.”

The executives turned to look at each other.

Regardless to their previous attitude, these people still had a good head on their shoulders. They quickly realized that this was a heavy agenda. Putting behind Lapis Lazuli's status for now, the executives started to mutter amongst one another.

"Is he planning to use debt to stop debt."

"That's the height of stupidity right there."

"The bunny is offering to get itself caught in the trap, there's no reason to decline."

"So? How much does he want to borrow?"

My thoughts were the same.

Demon Lords had a political use, even if he was a rank 71st Demon Lord. It'd be good to use this chance to tie him up.

However, after the following response, all of the executives went silent.

"The amount that Demon Lord Dantalian has requested is— 10,000 gold coins."

What?

The expression of the executives was dumbstruck.

"Is he sane!"

"Ha, for a bumpkin who couldn't even handle 100 gold coins."

He was crazy, that's insane. Those kind of words flew

out openly. Despite the fact that we were badmouthing a Demon Lord, who were at the peak of social status, it was fine. There was no one other than us to hear it.

“Are you certain. 10,000 gold coins. Was that what he said exactly?”

“Swearing on the River of Styx, I am certain.”

“He really has gone mad…….”

The executives smirked.

10,000 gold coins was about the amount an Earl would earn annually if the population in his territory reached 50,000. Last year, the budget processed by the Imperials from the Habsburg Empire was about 500,000 Libra.

For Demon Lord Dantalian, who didn't have either territory or citizens, to request for 1/50 the amount earned by a great empire in a year? Did he have a slime in his skull instead of a brain?

“My dear Keuncuska comrades.”

He had probably judged that the atmosphere was getting complex. Ivar Lodbrok opened his mouth.

The meeting room slowly became quiet. If that old vampire spoke, then even the most proudest of executives closed their mouths.

“I personally think that this is a good opportunity.

Certainly 10,000 gold coins is a fortune. However, if it means to make a Demon Lord forever be our housekeeping pet, then it is not that much of a precious amount.”

“Keruruk.”

I carelessly let out a laugh.

Sacred and inviolable representatives that symbolizes absolute dignity, one of the 72 lords that commands an army of demons. To have referred to such nobility as a housekeeping pet……. Indeed he was one of the three ancient vampires to still remain in this world. It was a haughty attitude fitting of Ivar Lodbrok.

Well, I’d feel sorry for leaving this entire meeting to only Ivar Lodbrok. Let’s step forward a bit here.

“Wait, chief. I have something that I wish to ask on my side.”

“Mm. Do not mince your words and speak your thoughts.”

Ivar Lodbrok met my eyes.

Pure red pupils. It was a color that reminded people of blood. There were some executives that’d whisper to one other that those eyes were frightening, however, for some reason, I could only think of those eyes as beautiful. Cold-hearted, harsh, and a cynical vampire……. Ivar

Lodbrok will most definitely establish this firm into an imperishable company. If possible, I want to be there when that happens. That was my small dream.

“Could it not be a trap?”

“A trap?”

“Not one or two gold coins, but no less than 10,000 gold coins. Keruk. If Demon Lord Dantalian truly wasn’t insane, then he would have a plan.”

I did not think that Demon Lord Dantalian could possibly possess the ability to handle this huge loan. Regardless, one must consider every possibility in the world. This had to be made clear.

“That is a fairly good point.”

Hm?

Ivar Lodbrok was smiling faintly. It was an expression he’d show when he was thinking of a wicked plan. Even if he was as old as old can be, that man had cool wrinkles.

“Lapis Lazuli shall explain that part.”

“Yes, chief. I’d like to inform the pillars of Keuncuska. Currently, Demon Lord Dantalian is regarding myself as his concubine.”

“.....What did you say?”

“This may be rude to say, but on my own decision, I

had used my charms to entice the Demon Lord Dantalian.”

This time, the executives could not hold back their astonishment.

On the other hand, Lapis Lazuli—from start to finish maintained her emotionless face. Always calm.

No, I didn’t know whether to call that calm. Any sign of tension on her face was completely missing. For a normal office worker to not even twitch a brow when in front of all these executives? Calm or not, that was clearly strange…….

“Lapis Lazuli. What do you mean by charm?”

I spoke with a sour tone.

“Are you saying that you captured the Demon Lord by using your body?”

“Just as you say, sir Torukel.”

Lapis Lazuli looked straight this way.

Solid pupils as blue as azure.

Her transparent gaze did not even budge.

“I had relations with Demon Lord Dantalian.”

“My god.”

A few executives murmured to themselves.

If one were to fornicate with a mixed blood crossbreed, a curse from God will fall upon you. It may

have just been a superstition but when 90% of the population on this continent believed it seriously, you could not brush it off. For a sacred and inviolable Demon Lord to be defiled by a crossbreed. That itself was the obstinate problem. This would cause a tremendous issue to occur.

“Do you understand what you have done!”

“We could be excommunicated by the temple!”

The executives were thrusting their fingers at Lapis Lazuli’s face.

If you wanted to sell and buy products in this continent, then you had to have received a permit from the temple. Also, excluding the temple of Aphrodite and Artemis, all other temples strictly forbid untouchables from having intercourse with people of different social status…….

The executives, with red faces, shouted.

“Chief! Kick that whore out right this instant!”

“Not only did she go against the laws from the Gods, but she has also put our firm in danger! We shouldn’t have let that accursed being into our firm in the first place!”

“This leprosy-like scum……!”

Criticism took the conference room by storm.

The prostitutes of the demon world, succubus.
And amongst those, the especially disgusting crossbreed.
Even I, who disliked the hierarchical system, was speechless. However, Ivar Lodbrok was calmly sitting in his seat and watching the succubus.

“That is not all. There is still one part that must be explained to the executives. What are you doing? Hurry up and tell them.”

There was a mischievous laugh mixed in Ivar Lodbrok’s voice. ……He was enjoying this? Even though, adding a bit of exaggeration, the life and death of our company was on the line? In any case, vampires were not sane. Their heads were weird since they didn’t receive any sunlight. Lack of nutrition gives a serious blow to your mind. As a goblin with both refinement and common knowledge, I couldn’t keep up with him.

“Yes. There is something that I have still not told all of the executives.”

Lapis Lazuli continued to speak in a low tone.

She had received all kinds of curses and swears a second ago. Are you telling me she was still unfazed? She really was not normal.

“As you all may know, originally our firm did not deal with Demon Lords below the rank of 60 as customers.

Since it meant that the class of our firm would go down. Regardless, I have been working as Demon Lord Dantalian's exclusive consultant for the past year now. There was only one reason for this."

After taking one breath, Lapis Lazuli announced.

"I, personally, had strongly requested for that consultant position."

"What?"

"From the beginning I had been aiming for the position of Demon Lord Dantalian's mistress."

The executives started to get noisy.

The people who were criticising the succubus a second ago were now baffled. It was because Lapis Lazuli had spoken in such a dignified fashion. The situation was going further away from the area in which the executives could understand.

At that moment, someone laughed.

Turning my head, Ivar Lodbrok was laughing loudly. To be laughing in this kind of situation. Ignoring the fact that the executives were all dumbfounded, Ivar Lodbrok let out a roar.

"Comrades. Do you still not understand? Demon Lord Dantalian did not suddenly go insane. Everything was done by that succubus. In no more than a year, that kid

was able to turn Demon Lord Dantalian into a slave of passion.”

“.....!”

So was that it. That’s what it was!

At last, everything made sense.

Although Lapis Lazuli’s status was low, she had quite the remarkable appearance. She had captivated the Demon Lord with her looks. And, unknown to us on how, she was able to incite the Demon Lord into borrowing a large fortune from the firm…….

The other executives must have also realized the true nature of the situation. Their faces were becoming pale. They weren’t giving Lapis Lazuli looks of contempt anymore.

“But…… why such a reckless act……?”

“To succeed.”

“Succeed?”

“The Demon Lord will become the firm’s informant. My contribution on this matter will most likely receive high praise.”

“.....”

Everyone. All of the members in the meeting room were at a loss for words.

What were they supposed to say to the office worker

who had just confessed with an emotionless face that ‘I had sold my body in order to succeed’.

Ivar Lodbrok, alone, has been laughing since before.

“How is it, comrades. Is this not a masterpiece!”

“……a masterpiece?”

I ended up asking back.

Ivar Lodbrok stood from his seat. He had spread his arms out wide as if he were showcasing something. It was like he was introducing the next actor to step on stage.

“That is so. A masterpiece. That half-breed is the trash of society. Born as a rat crawling on the floor. From the start she was destined to silently age and die in some back alley…… and yet, look! That succubus was not only able to get into the highest firm in the demon world, she was able to become the mistress of a Demon Lord!”

“…….”

“If this is not a masterpiece then what would it be. Is this pure desire to succeed not beautiful. Is this pure desire for power not blinding. Ooh, whenever I see a militant young lad like this I can’t help but shed a tear and praise out. **Power is a lady! Thus, they will always only love warriors!**”



The executives were overwhelmed by Ivar Lodbrok's madness.

But I was a bit different.

My heart was pounding.

That was the madness that I had fallen for.

Like a mosquito born in a dark and moist swamp would yearn for the glorious sun. I, who was always normal and followed common-sense, couldn't help but be attracted to Ivar Lodbrok who was located in the complete opposite of my position.

"Lapis Lazuli. Go and tell the Demon Lord! That we will gladly lend something like 10,000 gold whenever he desires!"

"I shall carry out your order at once, chief."

"And that great desire to succeed where you had even offered your virginity just for our firm. Truthfully, I took a liking to it. Keuncuska is a place only concerned about one's skills and contributions. You have more than enough rights to receive a reward. Tell me what you desire."

Ivar Lodbrok spoke coldly.

"Is it gold? Is it honor? I could even offer to adopt you as my daughter. Your biggest weakness is probably your status, right? If you become my child then that

weakness will disappear considerably.”

“Chief! No matter how much she has done that’s——”

“Do not impede on another person’s conversation, comrade.”

When the executives tried to oppose, Ivar Lodbrok silenced them.

“I’m trying to enjoy a conversation with this untouchability who was able to entice a Demon Lord.”

Eyes as red as blood slowly gazed over the executives.

A thick killing intent. The executives shrunk back their shoulders. The air in the meeting room instantly became cold.

“So, Lapis Lazuli. Tell me what you desire.”

“Please prepare a seat for me in the executive meetings.”

The other executives were badly shaken.

A normal white-collar office worker had just requested to become an executive. It was impressive. However, there was something more impressive. What shocked the executives more was Ivar Lodbrok’s response.

“Not gold or honor, but authority. Okay then.”

“C-Chief……!”

“If the plan goes well, then I shall promote you to the executive in charge of the entire region of Dolstat. With the Rhine River as the center, Cologne, Xanten, Wirthen,

Strasbourg, Duisburg, Worms, and Mainz will be in your jurisdiction. How is that?”

Ivar Lodbrok was examining the girl. He was most likely testing her boldness with his eyes.

“It would be an honor.”

“The strength of the Empire has weakened, so in accordance to that, the autonomy in these cities are at the highest point ever in history. As much as the development has suddenly changed, empty-headed people will be tossed to the side and only the true talented people will survive. Lapis Lazuli. I wonder if you will be able to withstand these conditions.”

“I will prove it with my ability.”

“Of course you will. Since if you took out ability, then you’d have nothing.”

For the second time, Ivar Lodbrok laughed loudly.

In the dark conference room, all the executives were dumbfounded. It was as if this old vampire and this cold succubus were in a world of their own.

I must admit, this had become an absurd situation.

To make a succubus who lacked a lot of experience, and was also a half-breed, into a branch manager. There was a limit to advancing quickly. This will be the first time in Keuncuska history, as well as it will be its last

for this to happen.

“Keruruk.”

But, Demon Lord Dantalion, huh. I did get the feeling that we were looking down on him too much…… but oh well. He was only rank 71st anyways. It would be good enough to just put a decent amount of caution.

This was interesting. I ended up getting a bit excited too.

Let us enjoy playing around with his highness Demon Lord.

□ *Weakest Demon Lord, Rank 71st, Dantalian*
Empire Calendar: Year 1505, Month 6, Day 20
Dantalian's Demon Lord Castle

“.....Does your highness plan to stay in bed all day today as well?”

“If you think that I’m not doing anything just because I’m lying in bed, then you are heavily mistaken. Despite the way I am, the fate of the universe is being spread out in my head.”

Two months had already passed.

Ever since I had borrowed the gold, I had spent the past 2 months plainly doing things at my leisure. It had already become a daily routine for Lapis Lazuli to come find me and start sighing.

“The piled interest is already no less than 2,000 Libra.”

“Ah, this book is quite enjoyable.”

I was flipping through a book while lying down. The title of the book was 〈Chronicles of the Great Demon Lords and the Custom Laws That Were Derived From Them〉.

The reason why I was reading this kind of literature was simple.

The information I had of this world was heavily leaned towards one side.

〈Dungeon Attack〉 was a game where you played in the shoes of the human hero. Thanks to that, I may have been knowledgeable about the humans and their society, but I was ridiculously ignorant regarding the demon world.

At most, there was a vampire heroine that falls for the protagonist and thus surrenders to him. But that was it. That heroine never went into details about the demon world.

Well. It just meant that I had to study it on my own.

“Hoh. In this world, for a Demon Lord to attack another Demon Lord, they must have at least sent a declaration of war two times, huh. What a pointless place to stick to formality. Although, it is an impressive means to prevent war. Hm, hm.”

“If your highness continues to not take any measures

like this, your highness will end up bankrupting within 3 months. Please be aware, your highness.”

“I want to eat some ice cream—”

“.....”

She had probably realized that this side was completely ignoring her.

Lapis Lazuli pressed her forehead with her index finger and thumb. Although her face was still emotionless, I could judge by her mood that she was receiving a lot of stress.

I gave her a bold-faced smile.

“Do not worry. Since all the preparation is already complete.”

“.....My apologies, your highness. Excluding the order that your highness had given this one two months ago, has your highness done anything else?”

“That was all the preparation needed.”

About 50 days ago.

I had made Lapis Lazuli purchase a certain herb en masse. Right now, it was a plant that most people would only consider it to be merely a useless piece of greenery. However, I knew the future.

The current date was year 1505 on the Empire calendar.

This summer, an infectious disease will occur and spread across the entire continent.

In the future this disease will be known as the Black Death and spread throughout the continent as the symbol of fear. Nearly 40% of the entire population on the continent will be wiped out, making it so that calling it a nightmare wouldn't be even remotely close to describing the event. In Dungeon Attack, the game started around the time that the Black Death had already passed..... to be exact, the game story started in the year 1515 on the Empire calendar.

A tragedy yet to have arrived. It was something I shouldn't be concerned with, right? The interesting part was what came next.

This plague, surprisingly, had a cure.

The name was plainly 'Black Herb'. Since it cured the Black Death, it was thus called Black Herb. The people of this world had a dreadful naming sense. They'd probably give an illegitimate child a better name.

'Angel's Herb', 'Goddess' Mercy', 'Apollon's Liver', these kind of glittering nicknames followed after.

However, this was also talk of the future. The summer of 1505 on the Empire calendar, before the plague had arrived, this Black Herb was simply a weed. In many

regions, this was a plant that didn't even have the honor of having a name.

That was it.

A weed.

It was a piece of greenery with absolutely no monetary value—.

I, using all 10,000 gold coins, invested into this plant.

Truthfully, it was easy.

First, I made a contract with the smaller merchant firms around the continent. Next, through the smaller firms, I was able to form a contract with the pharmacists spread throughout the land. And finally, the pharmacists hired herb gatherers from cities and villages. Instantly, a three-way contract was signed. The broker and transportation fee for the small firms, 2,000 gold coins. The pharmacy fee and herb gatherers' personnel expenses, 6,000 gold coins. In addition, in order to be able to keep the herbs as fresh as possible, I had obtained a semi-permanent storage of the highest quality.

I was still not used to this world's customs, but it was fine. I planned big wherever I was. All the detailed(lazy) affairs were handled by Lapis Lazuli as a proxy.

The person to go around making contracts with the small firms and pharmacists was not myself, but Lapis

Lazuli. Some could say we were a good match. We were quite the amazing combination.

People who didn't know the inside story would probably burst out in laughter if they saw this.

He had borrowed 10,000 Libra and we were curious as to see what he would do with it, but would you look at that. He bought a bunch of plants that weren't even used to eat, and was storing them as if they were some sort of treasure.

Lapis Lazuli had tipped me off on what the executives at the firm were saying, 'That's the biggest joke I've heard all year', they said and laughed their heads off, is what she told me.

Demon Lord Dantalian's antics were even the talk of the town.

'The foolish act of the lowest and crazy Demon Lord.'

'10,000 gold coins worth of bullshit.'

'Throwing his life away just for some attention!'

etc etc

I was incredibly pleased.

To be able to put laughter into other people's lives with such trifling matters. Was this not the true fruits of life? Besides, we all lived an endlessly hard and dry life. If I was able to put a smile on these people's faces then

I could not be more happy.

Was I serious?

That's why I'll be making it more interesting.

Not the best joke you've heard all year, but the best joke you will ever hear in your entire life. "The plant that we thought was just a weed was actually as rare as a jewel!", that was the kind of ending that awaited. If you had common sense, then you could only laugh till your insides shook.

"I truly am curious as to what face you will show me in a month."

"Pardon?"

"Since you display no emotions all year round. It'll be alright for you to look forward to it. I will most certainly make you laugh."

".....This one does not understand what your highness is talking about."

"Wait patiently and you will know everything."

While rolling around on my bed, I giggled.

Was it because I had teased her a bit too much. A notice popped up.

【Merchant Lapis Lazuli's affection went down by 1.】

Oh dear. With this, Lapis Lazuli's affection had become 0. It had been dropping since 2 months ago, and now it had finally reached the bottom. A stranger would probably treat me better than her now.

"Apologies, but this one shall take her leave here. There is a lot of paperwork from the firm that has been pushed back.

Lapis Lazuli coldly turned her back towards me.

"Ah, Lala."

"What is it?"

"Take this with you."

I tossed her a piece of parchment.

Lapis Lazuli received the note with both hands.

".....Your highness. This is?"

I gave her a playful wink.

"It is fine to not return to my castle for the time being. Instead, go to that location and look at the situations there. Since you will discover something interesting."

After Lapis Lazuli gave me a gaze full of a suspicion, she soon departed.

That piece of paper was the last trap. Lapis Lazuli will most likely realize the existence of the trap much later. I look forward to that day.

□ *Keuncuska Merchant, Mixed Blood, Lapis Lazuli*
Empire Calendar: Year 1505, Month 6, Day 27
Syracuse Relaxation Hot Springs

“Haa…….”

Sighs kept coming out. I wonder how many times that made it now.

The great Keuncuska executive candidate, Lapis Lazuli, was currently at a hot spring. It was a place where the citizens enjoyed taking baths. Men and women were proudly walking in front of me in the nude.

Although I’m saying this, I too was unclothed. Men would stroll through the halls and look this way with an obscene gaze. Their eyes were incredibly unpleasant. ……I wanted to crush the eyes of each and every one of these men.

Hot springs were not only a place for relaxation, but it

was a type of love area as well. In other words, you could say people were dating in the nude.

A man and a woman would go into a spring and naturally start to philander. It was a kind of culture. Even now, I could hear the sound of moaning over on the side……. I was desperately keeping my head turned away.

“Haa.”

Another sigh.

There was a reason, that was so simple that it was shocking, as to why I was here in Syracuse, the southmost area in the continent. In the note that his highness Dantalian had passed onto me had contained strange words.

Sardinia Kingdom, Syracuse, Citizen Bathhouse, Clinic

Starting point

Joint pain, High temperature, Skin turning black

At glance, if one had no context then it'd appear like some code.

His highness Dantalian had been mentioning a disease for the past two months now. At the time, I had misunderstood that it was just his highness purposely

saying nonsense. However, after seeing him write this note and pass it on to me, it seemed he was actually serious about it……. This was a joke, right? Anyone was fine, so please tell me this was a joke.

Was that so. Was there no one.

“Haa.”

I had sighed for the third time already.

Diseases themselves were not rare. Regardless, to predict when and where a disease would appear? In addition to that, to also already know what the cure to that disease was? That was impossible. That was why it was natural that the executives were treating his highness as a madman.

Honestly, it may have been a little amount, but I had hopes.

His highness, who was once helpless but had overcome a life or death situation, to be reborn as a true Demon Lord……. That kind of folktale-like story, it may have been a small amount, but I had hopes for it.

But rank 71st.

Was he just an idiot that was beyond remedy.

Demon Lord Dantalian really did absolutely nothing after having bought all those plants. He only rolled around on his newly bought bed like a child. It was

honestly pathetic.

“Ooh. Lady, you’re quite the pretty one.”

A pedestrian who was also using the bath tried to talk to me.

I was currently using magic to disguise myself as a human. It may had been magic but it was nothing impressive. I had only changed my hair color to red. Succubi were a demonic race, but their outer appearance was pretty much identical to that of a human. I was able to simply conceal my identity.

“How ’bout it, in a single pool for 3 silver…… euut!?”
“…….”

I looked into the man’s eyes for a moment.

He had probably mistaken me for some prostitute working in this bath, so I had returned him a cold gaze. As soon as we made eye contact he had taken a step back.

It seems that there was a peculiar murderous intent hidden in my eyes. There were not a lot of people who were able to stare me straight in the face. As the person directly involved, I didn’t understand that well.

“S–Sorry. I mistook you for someone else. Have a nice day!”

The man hastily ran back out to the halls.

His fleshy waist shook violently as he ran. It was pathetic. How could he have expected to buy me with 3 silver coins with a body like that. At the very least 10 gold. If he did not offer that much then an exchange itself couldn't possibly be established. No matter how I looked, men who couldn't judge their appearance objectively were all shabby.

I turned my steps towards the clinic of the hot springs. There were many patients here who got admitted believing in the effects of the hot springs. If perhaps, in a one in a million chance, his highness Dantalian's prediction about the disease was correct, then this was the starting point.

"Ah. What can we do for you, ma'am?"

The doctors welcomed me. They thought I was the daughter of some noble family. That a pure maiden, ignorant of worldly affairs, was coming to do volunteer work. Yes, I had used charm and suggestion magic to purposely delude them.

"How are the patients?"

"Well, it's pretty much the same. Day in, day out they groan and moan about it hurting. Truthfully speaking, the majority of the patients here are completely fine."

"I'd like to meet the most recent patient."

“There’s a bloke who was brought in just yesterday. But I don’t really recommend for you to visit him, miss.”

“Is there a reason?”

“Yeah. This guy’s fake illness is rather serious. My armpit hurts, my groin feels like it’s ripping, and so on. Talk about fussing over nothing. You’ll detest it, miss.”

“.....”

Joint pain

“.....No. That is alright. If it’s a patient, then I’d like to trust his words for now. I’d like to meet that person first.”

“Haa. How good-natured of you. I may be a petty doctor, but it’s been a long time since I’ve met someone as sincere as you, miss.”

While being delighted, the doctor led me to the sick ward. As soon as we had opened the door, a patient who was further inside started to holler.

“Aaah, I’m dying! This merchant for the great land of Syracuse is going to die because of a quack! Townspeople! Someone beat that quack up for me!”

“Gah. He’s like a pig in heat.”

The doctor sighed.

I understood why he had warned me about visiting this patient. The doctor, after taking a quick glance at me first, approached the patient.

“So what’s the problem this time, that’s making you have an epileptic fit?”

“Problem? What’s my problem? All right, I’ll explain it to you one more time, so this time make sure to carve it into your ear. First, the bed is so hard that my spine is about to become flat. Second, I’m not sure if the servants here are bringing me bread or stones, but my teeth are about to break apart. Third, the long-term doc friend I had keeps sighing whenever he sees my face and that’s starting to make my life miserable.”

“You, moron. My life is becoming miserable because of you.”

“Yeah? Good. We have finally reached the point where we make each other miserable. But that’s the same with the missus as well. My wife and I have been at each other’s throat for a while now, and at this point we’re only thinking of ways to screw with each other. Oi, pal. If you aren’t planning to become my second wife, then shit! Hurry up and act like a doctor and fix me up!”

“Damn it. This guy isn’t even helpful in life.”

It seemed that these two had been friends since they

were kids.

It meant that they were close enough to be able to freely swear at each other's faces.

It was a strange scene for someone like myself. Friendship. Could that actually exist?

Commonly, people would praise that friendships last forever. It was suspicious. No matter what sentence, whenever the adverb 'forever' was included, then I'd start off by being doubtful. I personally thought this was a good habit.

There were only backstabbers or potential backstabbers that existed in the world. That was my opinion. Friendship simply referred to a person who hadn't betrayed you yet.

"Sorry, miss."

The doctor abruptly apologized.

"This guy always had a crude mouth. Just think of it as his limit of education and ignore it if you can."

"I am okay. Please proceed with the checkup."

"Okay then."

The doctor placed his hand on the patient's forehead.

"Places here and there are indeed hot. But no matter how I see it, it's just a summer cold. I'll prescribe you with some medicine, so if it does get bad then take the

medicine. Other than that you should be fine, so don't worry."

"....."

High temperature

For an instant, disbelief had crossed my mind.

..... There was no way. I was overthinking it. Joints aching and having a fever, these were symptoms you could find anywhere. You couldn't consider something like these to be a sign of a disease.

"Eh, how do you expect me to believe the words of a quack?"

"If you keep calling me a quack, I'm going to prescribe you poison instead. If you keep saying something like that so loudly then you'll be hurting my dignity. You bastard. Are you planning to ruin your childhood friend's business like this?"

"It really hurts like hell! Here, look."

The patient suddenly pulled his top off.

The doctor panicked and turned to look at me, but I was the same as ever and stood calmly. I didn't care about the naked body of a man at all. More than that, there was something else that had caught my gaze.

The patient's right chest.

There was a **black** spot the size of a thumb.

"....."

My entire body went stiff.

Like a person who was petrified.

"Ara, what's this?"

"There's no reason to have this bruise if it was a normal cold."

"That, well. I guess you're right....."

The two didn't notice my sudden change in mood.

The doctor and patient were busy discussing with each other.

"That's weird. Did you perhaps catch an endemic disease from someone else?"

"That's something you, the doctor, should know. Not the merchant, you quack. If you don't want to get a job change to an undertaker, then cure me already. If I end up being a corpse by tomorrow then you don't have to worry about your reputation, because your life as a doctor will be over."

"Bah, spitting out annoying words, this dumbass."

Skin turning black

“.....I just recalled something that I have to do. I shall take my leave.”

“Ah? Oh, sure. Stay safe.”

With fast steps, I made my way out of the ward.

I did not have the leisure to give a proper farewell at the moment.

The situation.

I couldn't understand the situation.

Turmoil wrapped around my head and shook it violently. What was going on? Surely, you weren't telling me that a disease was actually starting to run rampant? And for it to also be according to Demon Lord Dantalian's prediction?

That was impossible. That was absolutely impossible. The ability to foretell the future only manifested in the smallest amount of the already small amount of saintesses. Even then, the last recognized case of a prophecy coming true was 210 years ago. There was no chance for his highness Dantalian to have such an ability, or it was supposed to be that way. But why?

.....I had to be calm. It was too soon to get ahead of myself. At most, it was only one patient. There was still the chance that it was just a coincidence that a patient with the symptoms that matched the nonsense that his

highness Dantalian had spouted was here. For starters, I had to visit the other doctors in Syracuse.

At least 2, no, at least 4 patients had to have the same symptoms before it could be judged as a disease. I must not panic. Prophecies were fantasies that appeared in story books. There was no way they could happen so easily in real life.

‘But, if his highness Dantalian was right…….’

A simple speculation.

I had only thought of it for a moment but the back of my neck was already cold.

His highness Dantalian, claiming they were the cure to the disease, had bought bulks of a certain weed. Naturally, the price of the leaf was incredibly low. Most of the gold was spent on personnel. Due to the exorbitant price, however, the amount of the plant that his highness Dantalian had bought…….

Was no less than 30,000.

If those truly were the cure, then no matter how low the price was, they’d sell for at least 2 gold each. Thus, 60,000 gold coins. That transcended the amount that his highness had initially borrowed.

No, that was still the situation where the money earned was set to the least. If the contagion were to

spread across the entire continent then it could cost 5 gold..... it would reach a preposterous state. An unprecedented amount of chaos would occur.

No one in the firm would predict this. A blunder among blunders. They will probably find the one responsible to blame, and ten to one, I will end up being that escape goat.

The goal of becoming an executive in Keuncuska.

The promise to leave me in charge of the entire region of Dolstat, as well.

Naturally, all of these will pop like bubbles.

“.....”

I carefully bit my lips.

Born in a back alley, I had lived my life scavenging sewers and trash. I had just barely been able to grab hold of an opportunity to escape that hell. I could not let all that go down the drain.

Certainly, I had hoped that his highness Dantalian would awaken as an actual Demon Lord. However, his awakening was only meant for my success and growth. Thus, I had never considered this situation.

My feet moved faster on their own.

On that day alone, I had visited every doctor in the city of Syracuse. And I had no choice but to give an

objective conclusion.

Severe fevers.

Pain spreading from the joints.

A symptom where the skin would turn black in areas.

“.....”

In my hands was the piece of parchment that his highness had handed me. Standing in the center of the city square, I kept staring down at the note for a long time.

16 clinics in the city of Syracuse.

29 patients with similar symptoms.

The next day the patients increased to 56 people.

25 patients complained of a sharp pain and then died.

10 days later, the patients in the hot springs that I had visited before had all died. Half a month later, the entire city was filled with the pained cries of the citizens.

His highness Dantalian's prediction was correct.

It was an epidemic.

An epidemic was going rampant.

□ *Keuncuska Executive, Miser Goblin, Torukel*
Empire Calendar: Year 1505, Month 7, Day 16
Keuncuska Firm, Amstel Branch

“Sir Torukel, an emergent report has arrived.”

“Keruruk. You discourteous fellow! Did I not tell you that no matter what happens, to not bother me when her highness Paimon was visiting!”

A fancy reception room.

I had gotten upset because of a secretary that had suddenly started pounding on the door.

Her highness Paimon was sitting across from me, that idiot. She was one of the most precious guests to the Keuncuska Firm. When this person was visiting, be it work or contact, I had forbade everything. This was a problem of common courtesy!

“Oh dear. This lady is fine, Torukel.”

Fortunately, her highness had displayed understanding first.

“It must be quite the urgent matter if he had to come in contact with you immediately.”

“I sincerely apologize. That secretary normally isn’t like this…….”

“I said that I was fine. This lady will be enjoying the fragrance of the tea, so you may take your time.”

Her highness Paimon smiled gently.

I wonder how benevolent this person was. She would always treat me, a lowly merchant, with gentleness. While being moved, I bowed several times.

Of course, once I had left the reception room, my expression had twisted.

“You fool. What is it, keruk?”

“I-I’m sorry.”

The secretary lowered his head while being nervous.

Even if you did that, the thought of forgiving you doesn’t come up. How dare he interrupt a meeting with her highness. Having come this far, it wouldn’t even be satisfying to cut his head off. He better be prepared.

“An urgent message had arrived from the firm headquarters. A mage wrote down the information onto a note and has delivered it.”

“No matter how urgent the message is, the person in that room is her highness Paimon. If the message turns out to be a matter of no importance, then I personally will cut your head off.”

“S-Sir Torukel……!”

“Hm.”

I quickly snatched the note away from the secretary and scanned it. Just like our firm to put importance on efficiency, only brief words were written down. Additionally, it was written in a code that only the executives understood, so I was the sole person here that was able to read it.

An epidemic outbreak.

Centering the harbors, the plague has spread throughout the entire region of the Sardinia Kingdom.

It is certain that it will spread to the countries in the vicinity soon.

Fatality rate: 80%

“What……?”

Once I had decoded this far, my brows creased.

For it to say that the fatality rate was 80%. Doesn't that mean that if 10 people were to catch the disease, then 8 people would die? This wasn't a normal contagious disease.

It also stated that it was ‘certain’ that the disease will spread to the countries in the vicinity. This was also serious. It was a rule for merchants to not exaggerate information. In these type of situations, it was normal to write that it was ‘expected’ to spread.

Surely, Ivar Lodbrok couldn’t have possibly made a mistake on this part…….

Certain? Did it mean that the epidemic was spreading at that much of an incredible rate? This was not good. An ominous premonition was looming over me…….

The following sentences made my pupils stop.

*The cure to the disease is in the Demon Lord Dantalian’s possession.
Currently estimated value, 1,200,000~3,000,000 gold coins.
All executives are to return to the headquarters immediately.*

“.....”

This didn’t make sense.

“I-I am sorry. Sir Torukel. I truly am sorry. I too, wanted to wait till her highness Paimon had left before handing this to you.”

This couldn’t be happening.

“To tell you the truth, this was a note delivered about an hour ago. But it was branded with the first class

classified seal. I thought it'd be troublesome for Sir Torukel if it were to be delayed any further…….”

It was impossible.

“S-Sir Torukel? Are you listening to me? Sir Torukel……?”

□ *Keuncuska Firm Owner, Pure-blood Vampire, Ivar Lodbrok*
Empire Calendar: Year 1505, Month 7, Day 16
Keuncuska Firm Headquarters, Highest floor

We were tricked.

Honestly, I was completely deceived.

“Hmm.”

In a dark room I was drinking wine by myself.

My glass continued to empty. It meant that I was that deep in thought. Somehow, it felt like I was going to be drinking till late at night, tonight…….

Who was it. Which person was the one to have made Ivar Lodbrok into a fool.

Demon Lord Dantalian was a small-fry. He lacked the ability to plot such a grandiose plan. Then who was it.

There was only one answer. The half-breed succubus, that girl was the one who had schemed everything…….

“Lapis Lazuli.”

While rolling the fragrance of the wine around my mouth, I spoke the girl’s name. Was it just my imagination. The alcohol tasted a bit sweeter.

The desire to succeed was beautiful. To not be satisfied with one’s current position and continue to aim higher. That was the attitude that everyone should naturally take. That was my thought.

Except.

If you show your fangs towards me then the story became different.

I will now teach Lapis Lazuli a lesson.

It was unfortunate that I had to stomp on a junior who had such a promising future ahead of them. I was speaking the truth. If you asked what I meant by that, then it was because Lapis Lazuli was going to become a living but not living doll.

I hold out my glass.

“Another cup.”

“.....”

A servant girl poured more wine without a word.

At one point, this girl too was a promising executive candidate. She was just like Lapis Lazuli. Having a low status, her desire for power was mesmerizing. The beauty

of her eyes were peerless. However, the decisive part was that she was a fool. She had revolted against none other than myself.

The bright eyes that would always shine with intelligence, was now a hazy and achromatic color.

Having lost her will and consciousness, she had dropped down to being a slave doll that obeyed my every command.....

“What a shame. Why is it that all the useful talents can’t resist the temptation to go against me?”

A sigh came out on its own.

I had turned my head towards the side, and there my face was reflected by the window. Surprisingly, I was grinning. Uncontainable joy was floating around the corners of my mouth. It appeared as if I was having a fair amount of fun.

It was true.

The fact of it being a shame was a lie.

What’s there to hide.

Personally, I was having the most fun I’ve ever had since forever.

For an unpredictable twist to occur, that was the joy of life.

To personally be able to trample the junior with a

promising career ahead of them, those were the fruits of life.

To turn that junior into a puppet, and like one would store wine to mature, to store her like a doll in my own personal collection——

That was the highest of pleasures.

“Lapis Lazuli.”

Once again.

I murmured the name of that beautiful girl.

I will cut every last hope that you have.

I will defile you from head to toe.

Once you fall into despair and begin to flounder, I shall pierce my fangs into your white neck and make you into my slave for eternity.

“Mm.”

I couldn’t hold back any longer.

I pushed my teeth into the servant’s neck.

“……Ah, aah…… aaaah…….”

The servant shuddered slightly.

Her conscience may have been gone, but her sense of pain remained.

The fragrance of her blood was like that of a well matured first grade wine.

I had collected **wine dolls** like her for the past

hundreds of years.

But for the past 60 years, the number of dolls had stopped at 32. Because people had stopped showing defiance towards me. It was a boring time.

The true owner of the Keuncuska Firm. Richest person in the demon world. One of the three pure vampires to walk this land. All of these were addressed to myself. Young ones brave enough to go against me were extremely rare.

In that meaning, Lapis Lazuli was the first obstacle to appear in 60 years. She was precious in that regard, and she was also precious as my 33rd wine.

.....Now that I thought about it. In my collection there was an elf, a witch, a werewolf, a centaur, a mermaid, and more. I had all kinds of races but not a succubus. Thus, Lapis Lazuli's value as a collection piece was higher.

I do wonder what fragrance of wine she'll give off.

I sucked the blood of the servant until she had fainted and laughed.

Keuncuska, oh great Keuncuska.

You shall repay blood with blood.

□ *Weakest Demon Lord, Rank 71st, Dantalian*
Empire Calendar: Year 1505, Month 7, Day 16
Dantalian's Demon Lord Castle

Life was beautiful.

To the point that, I, the most pessimistic person in history, should slowly start to admit that the world was beautiful as well.

According to the setting in Dungeon Attack, Demons Lords did not have parents. If you were asking what I was talking about, I was referring to the fact that Demon Lords were born from magical energy abnormally gathered at a single point. Purely made by chance. Their birth had nothing to do with having a good personality or being talented, it all relied on luck…….

That was why people couldn't help but look down on them.

It was like a competent peasant scorning an incompetent noble. People who had reached the top through their talent and ability alone looked down on Demon Lords. ‘They were only born as a Demon Lord by chance anyways. They wouldn’t be a challenge if you faced them head on.’, was what they’d say.

They were carelessly letting their guards down.

And it was fatal for someone to drop their guard, for even a second, around someone as villainous as I was.

There were only two cases where I’d think that the world was beautiful.

First, it was when I did absolutely nothing and rolled around on my bed.

The second, was when I stabbed a dagger into the people who underestimated me on their own. During these times were when I felt like I understood the true meaning of life.

……My little sister said that this was a perverted preference and fiercely denounced it. But I didn’t get her. Was it not the person who lowered their guard that was at fault?

When a lion hunts a rabbit, they put their all into the hunt. That was why hunting was an incredibly tiring job. If you were not going to do your best from the

beginning, then it was better off not starting the work in the first place. Half-assed work only returned half-assed results. It would be more efficient to just be like me and laze around all day and save energy.

If one had to endure their laziness and go hunting, then in one hit.

Kill the game off without giving it a single chance to resist.

Currently, the result of that was spread before me.

“Ooh, Lala. Your complexion looks rather dark today.”

“.....”

Lapis Lazuli was standing silently.

Her expression wasn't as sharp as it used to be. The eyes of hers, which used to be as transparent as glass, were unclear now. They were eyes that I had seen a countless number of times before, the eyes of a defeated person.

“Is it perhaps, that? The magical spell that falls upon women every month? You too, have a rough life.”

“.....How did your highness predict this.”

“Oh dear, Lala. I can hear impatience in your words.”

Like the reclining Buddha statue, I was lying while supporting my head with my arm.

“Always cool-headed and calm, that is your charm.

Please do show some more consideration to your beauty.”

Lapis Lazuli’s complexion grew darker.

A pitiful fellow.

Regardless, I rather liked mentally tantalizing the loser. Please partake in my ridiculing a bit longer.

“What is the reaction from the Keuncuska Firm?”

“.....It was like a stirred bee hive. A call up order for all the executives was sent out only a few hours ago. This one had also received the summons to come to the headquarters immediately.”

“Oh ho. Then why are you here instead of going to the firm?”

“.....”

Lapis Lazuli didn’t respond.

No, it would be correct to say that she wasn’t able to respond.

I smiled slyly.

“Should I guess what you’re thinking? You had judged that your life would be in danger if you were to go to the firm now. The firm executives have no idea that I was the one to have planned all of this. In their minds, the culprit to this incident was you, Lapis Lazuli.”

Lapis Lazuli glared at me.

Like a wounded beast staring with hatred at their hunter in the last moment.

“Was that why your highness had sent this one to Syracuse? To plant a misunderstanding in the firm executives. This one, on purpose.”

“Correct.”

If you thought logically, then the act of predicting a plague was impossible. **Someone**, mobilizing unknown methods, had spread the disease in Syracuse on purpose. That was the normal conclusion people would come to.

Who could that person be.

Who would the firm executives point their fingers at, as the criminal.

“The person to become the concubine of a Demon Lord and entice him, was also you.”

There was one woman who had captivated Dantalian with their body.

“The one to have seduced the Demon Lord into borrowing a large amount of gold from the firm, was also you.”

There was one woman who had passionately convinced the executives that it was the perfect opportunity to put a collar on the Demon Lord.

“Coincidentally, the person to have stayed in the area

where the disease had first spread, for a week at that, was also you.

There was one woman who had first reported exactly where the Black Death outbreak initially occurred—.

“Finally, the person to have bought several thousands of the plant that could cure said disease, was none other than you.”

That was so.

Just for this, I had left all the detailed affairs to Lapis Lazuli. The meeting of the small firms and pharmacy, and also the process of buying the plant. All the paperwork was done through Lapis Lazuli.

Now then.

“Now your firm executives have no other choice but to suspect you as the prime suspect.”

The most that Demon Lord Dantalian was, in this act, was a puppet controlled by the succubus. The one pulling the strings was the half-breed, Lapis Lazuli, was what all the executives would assume.

Although they were completely wrong.

I chuckled.

“Lala, you should have thought this far as well. That’s why you came here instead of returning to your headquarters. A good judgment. If you had gone to your

headquarters you would have been punished, no questions asked.”

Silence took over for a moment.

In a ruin-like Demon Lord room, previously destroyed by adventurers, excluding the bed the room was full of dust and rubbish, in this grey room, Lapis Lazuli was the first to break the silence.

“.....Why?”

Lapis Lazuli slowly opened her mouth.

“Why is your highness revealing everything to this one?”

“Because I evaluate you very highly, Lala.”

I stood from my bed.

“You are beautiful. I’m not complimenting your looks. I’m referring to your inner beauty.”

Rolling my snake-like tongue, I approached Lapis Lazuli.

“Despite being born a half-breed untouchability, you did not throw away your passion for authority. You even tried to sacrifice a Demon Lord for your own success. Just one more step. If you were able to take one more step, you could have become an executive at Keuncuska.....”

An unusual amount of lust for power.

Cool-headedness that did not fear sacrifice.

Adding to that, talent that leaped over one's origin and rank.

"I want to obtain you."

I lifted Lapis Lazuli's chin.

Endlessly blue eyes looked up at me.

"Abandon the Keuncuska Firm and come under my command. Keuncuska, in the end, is nothing more than a firm. Money may be great but it is not greater than authority. The thing that truly excites and enthuses people is authority."

".....Your highness has only just succeeded."

Lapis Lazuli spoke quietly.

Our faces were so close that we could feel each others' breaths.

"Of course, your highness will make a lot of money. However, there won't be any authority there yet. Your highness is still rank 71st, the lowest Demon Lord, there is no adequate foundation. How does your highness plan to present authority to this one?"

"I shall leave all the trading of the cure to you."

"....."

Lapis Lazuli hesitated.

I slowly moved my face closer to hers. I did not rush.

She was already caught in the center of the spider web.
She could not run away.

“Close your eyes. Imagine. The continent will scream as the nightmare like plague envelopes over it. No matter how short it lasts, 2 years. If it goes on longer, then over 5 years. Hundred and thousands of people, hundreds and thousands of people will die off. Among them there will be nobles and the rich. They, in order to stay alive, will do whatever they can to struggle.”

Lapis Lazuli, listening to my order, closed her eyes.

In a soft voice, I whispered into her ear.

“This cure that will allow you to control these people’s lives, I shall give it to you.”

“.....”

“Countless number of people in power will run to you in order to trade. If you sell the cure, then those people in power will live. If you don’t sell the cure, then those people in power will meet their end. A single word from you could make numerous authorities delighted, despair, sad, and regret for eternity…….”

I stroke her hip with a hand.

Lapis Lazuli, albeit weakly, furrowed her brows.

With my palm, I faintly felt her skin. It was a smooth body with no useless fat. As if I was searching through

the unknown, I passed my hand over here and there of her body.

From her chest to her stomach.

From her stomach to her waist.

“Half-breed. The rubbish of demons. Daughter of a whore. An untouchability. You who used to be condemned by these names and scorned will instantly grasp the lives of hundreds and thousands of people. How is it, Lala. How is that feeling, Lapis Lazuli.”

It was then, I felt something hard against my finger.

I found it.

“The thing you’re feeling right now, **that is authority.**”

I daringly pushed my hand into her clothes.

Lapis Lazuli furrowed her brows further. Did she think that she would be violated here? While being all smiles, I pulled out the round metallic object that was hidden underneath the waist of Lapis Lazuli’s clothes. Once I did so, Lapis Lazuli let out an “ah” sound while opening her mouth. It was a look of surprise.

It was silver-colored metal object.

At first glance it appeared to be a pocket watch. But if it was a real watch, then the key used to coil around the clockwork was supposed to be connected to the watch. This object didn’t have a watch chain.

“This is why I evaluate you highly.”

I playfully waved the metallic object in front of her eyes.

Lapis Lazuli bit her lips.

“.....Did your highness perhaps know from the start?”

“Well, it was a simple guess.”

Memory Play, a magic artifact.

It was a type of recording device that recorded audio and saved it. If the quality was good, then it could even record videos like a video camera.

This was an item that sold for a tremendous price in Dungeon Attack. It was most likely the same in this world as well.

Lapis Lazuli most likely wanted to prove her innocence to the firm executives. The problem was that she didn't have any proof. Thus, Lapis Lazuli was going to make new evidence.....

What evidence could prove her innocence. The most effective way would obviously be to get the confession from the actual culprit. There was no doubt that she would mobilize the use of the Memory Play artifact.

“It is sad. Mm, it has become quite unfortunate. If you did well, there was still the chance to become a proud branch manager in the Keuncuska Firm, but. Oh

goodness. Would you look at that——.”

I dropped the silver object to the floor.

And then, raising my right foot, I stomped down using the heel of my boot.

With a ‘crack’, you could hear the precise sound of mechanical parts breaking. I repeated the action 5 times. I then picked up the already wrecked device and tossed it as hard as I could at a wall.

I shrugged.

“It seems your last possibility has broken.”

“.....”

“Lala. You have two choices in front of you. These are choices that you can not refuse. First choice. Like this, abide to your summons from the firm and return with no evidence. Earnestly plea your innocence there. Then, hm. Then…… if you’re lucky then you might be able to keep your life.”

I softly tapped her shoulder.

“……What is the second choice?”

Lapis Lazuli spoke. It was splendid. Despite being checkmated her voice was still cold. No matter what desperate situation this girl was in, even if her life was on the line, it was clear as day that she would maintain calmness.

Like I did three months ago.

While surrounded by adventurers.

“Come under my wing. Lapis Lazuli. Oh, half-breed low one. If you devote to me your talent, then I will provide you status. If you devote to me your loyalty, then I shall give you power. I will make true the hopes and desires that you contain in your chest on this land, and you shall protect me from the hopes and desires of other people.”

In brief, give and take.

Was this not the most loveable logic.

“What will your highness do if this one was to betray your highness.”

“Ah, don’t be mistaken. I am not asking for absolute loyalty from you. If you wish to betray me, then do so. If you think someone other than myself will be able to give you more benefits, then of course you should.”

I did not believe in friendship.

I did not believe in love more.

Similarly, I did not have any trust in loyalty.

“But I will promise you this, you will enjoy to the fullest the highest power of authority.”

What I did believe in was equivalent exchange.

The act of reasonable people exchanging items of the

same value.

“.....”

“.....”

Lapis Lazuli stared at me. I did not avoid her eyes. Silence was only awkward when there was no meaning in each others’ eyes. We still had much to figure out from each other’s gaze.

I had something inside of myself.

And she as well, had something hidden inside of her.

We had no reason to fear silence.

At last.

“I understand, your highness.”

Lapis Lazuli got down onto one knee.

She looked to the floor and vowed.

“I, Lapis Lazuli, born from a Humbaba succubus and raised in the back alleys of towns and cities, a person to have worked as a third degree merchant for the Keuncuska Firm for 10 years, shall forget her past and live solely for the purpose of being Demon Lord Dantalian’s subordinate. This heart. This head. This soul, shall forever be in the possession of your highness.”

As soon as her oath of fealty was over several notices appeared.

【Lapis Lazuli has been recruited as a subordinate.】

【The degree of loyalty will appear in Lapis Lazuli's status.】

【Unstable loyalty. The other party purely regards you as a lord contractually. The other party can betray you at any time.】

I smiled.

I especially took fancy to the line of being betrayed at any moment. Be it sticky friendship or eternal affection, instead of high-flown lines like those, that line was more trustworthy.

The undying love that my father had vowed with my mothers, in the end, met with failure. Humans didn't have the strength to revere that kind of love. To dump emotions that you both can't handle onto one another will only bend your knees.

Dry from the start.

Instead of being bothered by such useless things, I'd rather be lazy.

Instead of being crudely serious, I'd rather be seriously crude.

This was my creed, my ironclad rules.

All of a sudden, from my memories, my father's thick lips moved clearly.

‘Son. Be prepared.’

‘No matter what you choose—’

‘You will live a life more harsh than I.’

Sorry, father.

I do not plan to repeat the life you had.

You had succeeded as a member of society. However, you had horribly failed as a husband. I had been displeased by that since long ago. Why would you be obsessed with something when you know you would fail?

If you weren’t certain to succeed then don’t dive in. That was my answer. It meant that people wouldn’t have to be in despair because of me. You were the one remorse in my life, father. I do not want to be the remorse of another person…….

“Good. Lapis Lazuli.”

I got on my knee as well to match her eye level.

We were not simply lord and vassal. Contractor and contractor. We were partners made on a promise of equal rights. I wanted to express that to her with my body.

“I, Dantalian, shall never return thy advice with silence and shall never return thy suggestions with scorn. If thou sweat and bleed for my behalf, then I shall repay every

drop of sweat and blood.”

I held her hand tightly.

I had felt it before, but her hand really was soft.

Lapis Lazuli, after looking at me for a long time, slightly, ever so slightly nodded her head.

“……My service to you, your highness.”

Three months since having fallen into this world.

I had appointed my first vassal.

□ *Keuncuska Executive, Miser Goblin, Torukel*
Empire Calendar: Year 1505, Month 7, Day 20
Keuncuska Firm Headquarters

The firm headquarters was more unsettled than usual.

Goblins were looking deeply into crystal balls and deciphering codes. And with the deciphered codes, they'd write it down on a piece of parchment in one stroke, then passed it on to a fairy.

Fairies the size of a palm groaned as they moved the parchment. From the operating department to the countermeasure department, distribution department, and the high-officer department. The headquarters was a rather large building, and yet the fairies were moving around so much that traffic congestion could be seen near the ceiling.

“Reports of a patient being discovered in Cologne!”

“We’re certain that the plague is following the Rhine River and spreading north.”

“That made the closure of the Sardinia Kingdom completely useless.”

“The lady of the House of Sforza has fallen due to illness…….”

Reports from all over the continent were arriving en masse. Headaches were wrapping around the employees. Among them, there was a goblin that had presumably skipped sleep for the past few days because his eyes were bloodshot and swelling. Keruruk, how pitiful.

Going through the headquarters, I made my way straight to Ivar Lodbrok’s personal office. For a second, I had thought that I had entered the wrong room. There were so many piles of papers stacked up, that you couldn’t even see the form of Ivar Lodbrok. If I hadn’t heard his gloomy voice over the heaps of papers, then I would most definitely have left the room.

“Is that Torukel.”

“Quite horrible. Keruk.”

“Oho, is this horrible. But it’s going to be more horrible later. Sit.”

“……to sit, where?”

Of course the desk was out of the question, but there

were piles of parchments all over the floor as well.

“Anywhere is fine. I have already put all the information over there in my head, anyways.”

“A freakish memorizing ability as ever…… So, is the plague showing any signs of dying down?”

“Not at all.”

Ivar Lodbrok replied instantly.

“The disease is spreading at a terrifying speed. Kalmar Union and the kingdom of Moscow, excluding Venetia, are all eroding to the plague. The remaining countries will also face the disease very soon. Our firm analysts are already predicting a 30% casualty rate.”

“30% of the entire continent is going to die? Are you joking?”

“If I had ever told a joke in my entire life, do tell.”

I unintentionally murmured to myself, 30%. It was unimaginable. It meant that millions of demons and humans will die. I couldn’t even speculate how bad the damage was going to be.

“Every lord has temporarily ceased all trade with our firm.”

Ivar Lodbrok spoke in a tone as if he was enjoying something.

Was he going to keep up with his jovial attitude even

in this situation? He really wasn't sane. Wait, more important than that, did he just say that every lord had ceased trades with us?

"Isn't that a big deal!?"

"Aah, it is a big deal. They are afraid that we will deliver not only the product but the disease as well. Due to that, the items we had prepared for a long time now are waiting in the cargos and storages only to rot."

"Don't tell me the other firms too……."

"They are the same. All commerce has stopped."

It was an unprecedented crisis.

This plague wasn't bringing harm to solely mankind. The economy itself on the continent was breaking down. That's why it didn't matter if you caught the disease or not, this was no different from everyone rushing straight to hell.

Once my face turned blue, Ivar Lodbrok changed his tone to be serious.

"Us demons at least have better circumstances. Since, different from humans, we have studied black magic for hundreds and thousands of years. We have an understanding on how to handle diseases and keep the damage to a minimum. However, humans are different. They had banned black magic on a national degree.

Thus, they are overwhelmingly lacking in experience and information. For them, not 30% but 40%. It could even possibly go up to 50%.”

“Oh, Lord. Goddesses…….”

“The problem was how Lapis Lazuli had predicted this epidemic.”

Ivar Lodbrok took a pipe out from underneath his clothes.

He started to mutter while pressing tobacco into the chamber of his pipe.

“To know what the cure of the disease was and claim a monopoly on it. This was not a coincidence. There’s no doubt that this plague was made artificially.”

“Are you saying…… that someone had spread this disease on purpose?”

Ivar Lodbrok nodded.

But was that possible? Lapis Lazuli was merely a half-breed succubus. She did not have the ability to make this kind of disease on her own. No, there was no one on the entire continent that was capable of doing this.

As if he had read my mind, Ivar Lodbrok spoke.

“If you thought with common-sense, then it’s an impossible tale. However, if it was Demon Lord

Barbatos, then it is possible.”

“Demon Lord Barbatos…….”

Rank 8th Demon Lord.

She was known as the greatest necromancer on the continent and was also referred to as the Immortal Monarch.

The army that Demon Lord Barbatos led consisted entirely of 5,000 undeads. They were corpses that had died long ago. If it was Barbatos, the maestro of black magic and diseases, then she could have created a plague like this. Was what Ivar Lodbrok had concluded…….

That meant that Lapis Lazuli was Barbatos’ pawn.

Dantalian was just the fake bait displayed at the front.

Was the true perpetrator Barbatos? Was that it. Was this the truth…….

“This is not a baseless assumption. Demon Lord Barbatos has always despised humans. If there were to be an outbreak, then the damage on the human side will heavily outweigh the damage on the demons. This was obvious.”

Ivar Lodbrok continued to speak in a composed manner.

“Therefore, it wouldn’t be weird if Demon Lord Barbatos was aiming to exterminate the human race with

an epidemic. It would be more appropriate to compliment that rational assumption.”

“.....That is horrible.”

I now understood why Ivar Lodbrok had told me that it was going to be more horrible later.

To spread an epidemic just to simply get rid of a single race. Escaping all rationality, this was an unforgivable crime. The thought, ‘Could people actually become this villainous’ floated through my mind and gave me the urge to vomit.

“Demon Lords, in the end, are that kind of character. In order to make their dreams a reality, they do not care whether means are fair or foul. It has been like this for thousands of years.”

“.....Should we be standing here without a word? While millions of people cry out in agony, Barbatos, Dantalian, and Lapis Lazuli are in cahoots. Retaliation is required.”

“I share that opinion. Torukel. Look at this.”

Ivar Lodbrok flicked his finger.

A certain scroll on his desk lifted up in mid-air and flew towards me. Receiving the scroll, I spread it out left and right.

On the parchment, it was written that in one months

time all the Demon Lords were to gather together to hold a meeting. It was called Walpurgis Night.

The location, Niflheim—— as it so happens, it was the city our Keuncuska Firm headquarter was located in. It was okay to look at this as a golden opportunity.

“Keruk. It’s the big meeting that only happens every several years.”

“It is most likely to create a countermeasure for the plague. Demon Lord Dantalian will also be attending. Ten to one, that little succubus will come along with him. We will end those two there.”

But.

Under the assumption that Demon Lord Barbatos was the true culprit, we still had no proof. However, if we threatened either Dantalian or Lapis Lazuli and then tortured them, then we’d be able to gain whatever evidence we required.

“Tell me what I should do, Lodbrok.”

Especially Lapis Lazuli. This girl, I could not forgive.

Despite the fact that we had summoned her, Lapis Lazuli had not responded. Contact itself was cut off. There was no other choice but to see this as a clear betrayal to the firm.

For her to forget about the grace we had provided for

her by taking her in.

A punishment must be ordered at once.

“For now, I will get in contact with Dantalian. Torukel. You go to her highness Paimon and make a request.”

“……To her highness Paimon?”

“The culprit is Barbatos. Only her highness Paimon could face against her.”

I nodded my head.

It was renown that Barbatos and her highness Paimon were on bad terms. If it meant to get a free hit on Barbatos, then her highness Paimon would not refuse.

Oh, great Keuncuska.

You shall repay blood with blood.

Name Lapis Lazuli

Race Succubus-Human
Mixed-blood

Job Merchant(B)

Reputation Ex-Village head



Leadership E rank Might D rank Intelligence A- rank

Politics B rank Charm E rank Technique F rank

Title 1. Orphan of a prostitute
2. Untouchability

Abilities Accountant A, Magic F
Merchant B+

Skills Judas Kiss(B+)

[Achievements: 1]

**DUNGEON
DEFENSE**

第 4 話

로맨틱한
기만전술

Romantic Deceptive Tactics

□ *Weakest Demon Lord, Rank 71st, Dantalian*
Empire Calendar: Year 1505, Month 8, Day 15
Dantalian's Demon Lord Castle

To leave one's home only leads to trouble.
I declare that that sentence was the truth.
Traditionally, people gained life lessons from
biographies of great people.

The one truth I was able to discover from swimming
through the history of mankind from time immemorial,
was that every incident to ever happen was outside one's
home.

The reason Buddha went through such hardship was
because he had run away from home. The reason Caesar
was assassinated was because he had uselessly wandered
around outside.

The most memorable death was that of philosopher

René Descartes. This man originally spent his time taking naps, however, his superior had suddenly ordered him to ‘come to work by 5am’, and thus resulted in René Descartes dying of overwork. After learning of such historical tragedy, I had come to a conclusion at a young age: Never go outside. Then your safety will be certain.

History scholars would probably gladly give a standing ovation to such a brilliant solution. My name would be forever remembered as the advocate of theory in the history books.

But, I couldn’t be happy.

The world was overflowing with people who begrudged geniuses. It may be possible to impress the history scholars, but to receive the admiration of the public was incredibly difficult. Recently, I had been experiencing my mornings gloomily, like a genius being tragically eaten alive by the jealousy and envy of the people…….

“Your highness Dantalian.”

The culprit to create this tragedy was Lapis Lazuli.

Ironically, she was my first vassal.

“It is already 11am. Please wake up.”

“Mm, mmm…… is 11am not still the crack of dawn……?”

“This one does not know where to raise an argument

first. If this one had to point out one thing then it is that 11am absolutely is not dawn.”

Lapis Lazuli spoke calmly.

This inflexible succubus, representing the people, did her utmost to interfere with my shut-in life. I think she had mistaken that doing so was her duty by fate.

I groaned as if I was a politician being assaulted by the nasty media.

“Who, with what right, said that 11am is not dawn……?”

“Sound common sense decided so.”

I pulled my blanket over my head.

To want to take me away from this comfortable feeling. If this wasn’t an unimaginable violence, then I didn’t know what it was. Not only was that succubus’ period getting worse, but there was a loose screw in her head, I was certain.

“Most people have a mental sickness. Common sense is nothing more than rules that those mental people had arranged on their own. Therefore, rules for a mental hospital. As a unique sane individual, such as myself, I shall not fall to the pressure of those psychopaths…….”

“Haa. Your highness has been sleeping for 22 hours now.”

Show some moderation and get up.

Was the small warning I could hear from her voice.

I hugged my pillow even tighter, displaying my will to resist desperately.

“Stop thinking so firmly. The world won’t come to an end. And since it isn’t, then it’s better off getting in 10 more minutes of sleep.”

“.....Did your highness mention the end of the world just for 10 more minutes of sleep? This one cannot help but be amazed by your highness’ extraordinary leap in logic.”

Lapis Lazuli spoke as if she was dumbfounded.

“It is a conceptual shift. I live life to the fullest everyday as if it was my last. In short, I do my very best to be lazy.”

“This one had never imagined that the word lazy and the word best had such a close relation to one another. No matter how much this one looked, your highness’ use of words is always marvelous.”

Tack

The sound of a finger snapping could be heard over my blanket.

The moment after, my blanket started to move restlessly and then rose up by itself. It was magic. I

hurriedly reached up and tried to at least grab the edge of my blanket, but it was in vain.

“Ah, aah! Wait!”

“Please sleep moderately. There is no need to sleep excessively in one’s life. Even if one were to die, then wouldn’t they be able to sleep for all of eternity in their grave?”

The blanket was sent flying across the entire room.

I glared fiercely at Lapis Lazuli.

“Magic is cheating!”

“This one had thought that your highness loved cheating.”

“The only one allowed to cheat in this world is me. It’s only appropriate for everyone else to live life being fair and square. That way I’ll be able to gain profit whenever I want, is that not right!?”

“By the looks of it, it seems that this one might have chosen the wrong lord to serve…….”

Lapis Lazuli let out a small sigh.

“Your highness. The Walpurgis Night will be held on the day after tomorrow. If we do not depart now, then we may end up not being able to attend the meeting.”

“Not attend. That’s good. Not attend. Truthfully, that has a beautiful ring to it.”

“You cannot. If your highness Dantalian is absent from the plague countermeasure meeting, while being in possession of a mass amount of the cure, then your highness will receive heavy criticism and be berated. If it means to protect your highness’ honor, then this one is prepared to use drastic measures.”

“Hoo. You’re coming on rather strong.”

I snorted.

“Sorry, but I don’t have parents or a family, nor do I even have a childhood friend that was separated from me at a young age. In other words, I’m the **absolute strongest!** How you plan to bring down I, Demon Lord Dantalian, when he doesn’t have a single weakness, is something I wish to see. Go ahead, use that drastic measure that you seem to be so proud of.”

“Yes. Then as this one is ordered to.”

Taack

Lapis Lazuli snapped her finger again.

The pillow that was held tightly between my arms had smoothly slipped out of my grasp.

“Noooooooooooo!?”

“Then. This one has done as your highness has commanded.”

“Why are you slyly lifting your chin up proudly!?”

Return my pillow immediately! That is not a simple pillow! That is my **soul**. That is a part of my soul!”

“My apologies.”

It was then, with a ‘poof’, the pillow exploded.

White feathers rained down.

“My pretty soul——!?”

I screamed.

Like a hero who had just lost his childhood friend(engaged · 2 months pregnant) that was a mage to the Demon Lord, my body shook violently.

“The soul has died.”

“You Devil!”

“It is fine to call this one a Devil. With Devil like ways, this one shall make your highness get up. Even if your highness was to punish this one, this one shall remain loyal till the very end.”

“Why is your side the one being conceited!? Have our positions not switched!?”

“Apologies. Since this one is, in reality, quite the distinguished subject to your lord.”

“It sounds like you’re repenting but it actually sounds annoying……!?”

“It has been one month since this one has been appointed to your highness Dantalian. During that short

period of time, this one had met with no more than 72 firms and sold the cure to the disease. In order to purposely sell the black herb at a high price, this one had released the supply slowly, thus allowing this one to sell the herb for an extraordinary price of 10 gold a piece. Due to this, there is a total of 500,000 Libra in your highness' vault. There are still over 25,000 herbs that we have yet to sell. This trade, with no doubt, will go down in history.”⁹⁾

“You really are distinguished……!?”

“That is so. One could say that this one was on a different dimension to your highness, who had spent the past month philandering with a pillow.”

I thought it was more impressive in another meaning that Lapis Lazuli could speak from start to finish with a completely stoic face. Really.

If I recalled correctly, in <Dungeon Attack>, the annual income of the Imperials in the Habsburg Empire was 500,000 gold. Lapis Lazuli was able to earn an amount similar to that in only a month.

Honestly, I admitted that she had an enormous ability.

9) TL note: The author made a mistake here. $10 \times 5000 = 50,000$, so he actually has 50,000 libra in his vault. The mistake is fixed later by the author

If she had not interfered with my sleep, then I would have even patted her head.

However, she had not only plundered me of my blanket, but she had destroyed my pillow as well—Lapis Lazuli had done something irreparable and had crossed the Rubicon River.

Compromise was impossible.

I, as a proud member of the Roman Res Publica elder council, sincerely despised the tyrant that didn't know his place and was trying to become a dictator. It'd be a good idea to celebrate your victory now, Julius Caesar. In the end, you will be stabbed in the back by the child you thought was kind and gentle…….

“……What should I do. Just because I had destroyed a pillow, the man whom I had sworn to serve as my lord is glaring at me as if I was a sworn enemy. Before being troubled, I feel more shocked.”

“Lala.”

I warned her seriously.

“It is fine to use my name in order to gain authority. It is also fine to fill your back pockets as you earn money. There is one thing. Regardless of all that…… it is absolutely unforgivable to treat my pillow with contempt! Do you understand? This is a strict order!”

Lapis Lazuli looked at me.

She had the eyes of a person looking at unrecyclable industrial waste.

□ *Mixed Blood, Lapis Lazuli*

Empire Calendar: Year 1505, Month 8, Day 15

Dantalian's Demon Lord Castle

I was able to drag his highness outside.

According to his highness Dantalian, it has been four months since he had last gone out. Ever since Riff's adventurer group had invaded, he had shut himself in the cave.

By any chance, was his highness Dantalian not a Demon Lord but a vampire? I could believe this kind of nonsense right now. One could only be astonished by his highness' laziness.

"T-The sun, it's too strong……!"

As soon as we had left the cave, his highness screamed.

Covering his face with his arms, he sunk to the floor.

……Are you a ghoul? Are you the type of undead whose flesh melted when under the sun?

What was worse was that it wasn't even the afternoon. It was the evening. The beautiful glow of the setting sun was floating in the sky. Even ghouls with rotten innards would move around energetically during this time of the day. As soon as I had pointed that fact out to his highness, his highness gave me a serious look.

"How ignorant. Originally, people as weary of life as I am find even the setting sun to be blinding and overwhelming."

"That speech may be nice, but the actions done by your highness are the worst."

I still can't believe it that well.

Was this lazy man truly 'the' Dantalian that had vastly toyed with the Keuncuska Firm? It wasn't some mistake, right?

A sigh drifted out of my mouth. That was the 21st sigh today. I should be cautious to not let this become a habit.

"……Originally, using teleportation magic would be the fastest method of transportation. However, because of the plague outbreak, all cities have placed a ban on teleportation. We will be using a different method."

“How splendid. To be quickly trying to put countermeasures for the disease, that shows how competent the city management are. I give them my respect. And in that sense, I shall wait patiently for the ban to be lifted.”

His highness turned his back and tried to move towards the cave entrance.

However, without being able to take two steps, he stopped. I had grabbed hold of his highness’ cloak beforehand.

“This one will never let your highness go.”

“Damned forever-on-her-period succubus.”

“It does not matter if your highness swears at this one. Does your highness know how many hours it took to drag your highness all the way here?”

“Uuuuh…….”

“It does not matter if your highness makes a pitiable face as well. In the first place, a pitiful expression does not fit your highness. Please restrain yourself from ever doing so again since there is the danger that it will cause the on-looking party to vomit.”

“You really are excessively honest!?”

I pulled out a pocket watch and checked the time. Since teleportation magic wasn’t possible, I had called

witches.

The Berbere sisters. They were one of the 5 talented groups in the demon world. Although, in this day and age, broom travel had become an antique due to teleportation magic, there was no other choice. You had to make do with what you could get…….

“They should be arriving soon.”

The pocket watch pointed towards 11 hours and 55 minutes.

This clock interlocked with the other party’s pocket watch. It displayed when the other party would arrive. This was an essential magical tool for busy merchants.

The starting point was 12 o’clock on the dot. The further they were from your location, the time would change accordingly. If it was 11:55 then it meant that they were 5 minutes away. The witches were going to arrive within 5 minutes.

And sure enough.

The sound of a song could be heard. It felt like it came from the sky, but it also felt like it was coming from across the forest that was spread out in front of the cave.

*“A dream world, we drift into the magical sky.
Spin, all and everything will spin.
The planets will spin, the shooting stars will spin,
everything will spin.
Hand in hand, us witches will also spin.
You thrice, I thrice, once more we spin thrice.
Get along and add it together and we’d have spun
three hundred thirty-three times.”*

The chorus grew closer.

At first, it appeared like winter geese were flying across the sky. Except, they were too large to be called geese. In truth, the wings were a cape, and the beak was a broom.

Taak

12 witches landed gracefully.

All of the witches, in perfect sync, knelt down.

“—Sacred and inviolable representative that symbolizes absolute dignity, one of the 72 lords that commands an army of demons.”

Amongst them, the witch that seemed to be the leader spoke.

It was a girl with short trimmed pale blonde hair.

“It is more than an honor to be allowed in your

highness' presence."

"May the Goddess Hecate's blessing be upon you all. Raise your heads."

His highness Dantalian responded as per courtesy.

"We will be in your care for the time being. Do take care of us as much as you can."

His face was serious. You couldn't even see a trace of the person who was childishly screaming about how the sun was blinding him earlier. No matter who saw, you could only see a solemn and noble Demon Lord, that was it.

.....I consider that cheating.

"Yes, great lord. Us Berbere sisters will do our utmost to provide your lordship a comfortable and relaxing trip!

The witch in charge responded energetically.

She probably had not noticed his highness Dantalian's true form to even the slightest amount. Her face was glowing with the self-pride that she was able to serve a Demon Lord. That pureness was enviable.....

While drawing magic circles on the ground, the witches prepared for the travel busily. Their brimmed cone hats were so big that it covered more than 2/3 of their heads. It was cute.

His highness Dantalian suddenly whispered in my ear.

“Lala. Are the witches not excessively young?”

“……Too close. Your highness, please move away.”

“Ah. Sorry about that.”

It was troubling that his highness would get so close to me at times.

Has he forgotten that I was an untouchability?

Luckily, the witches did not know of my status. Regardless, just the fact that I had whispered with his highness alone was good grounds for a large problem to occur. Demon Lords were sacred and inviolable representatives that symbolized absolute dignity. For me, who used to be a mere peasant, the very action of even conversing with his highness should be impossible. What could he be possibly thinking…….

I sighed and — Oh dear, that was the 22nd sigh — I straightened my posture.

“Do not judge witches by their outer appearance. Once witches make a life contract with a Demon Lord, all of their bodily growth stops for eternity. If they appear young, then it meant that they were that talented of an individual…… and were scouted at a young age.”

“Ho.”

It was so.

In the world of witches, the young did not respect the

elderly. It was the complete opposite. The old worshiped the youth. It'd be better to say 'respect the young', instead of 'respect the elderly'.

All members of the Berbere sisters had the face of young girls. It meant that they were all immensely talented individuals. In addition to that, on their chest was a three-leaf badge. A triphyllous badge. Thus meaning that they had participated in the Viet war 3 times. Due to the racial division method, the witches would have been on the front lines of the air battles, which was known to have the highest casualty rate. They were the elite of elites.

I wonder if the preparations had all finished. The leader girl was hopping her way over to us. She was most likely at least 200 years older than I was, and yet, I wonder why she appeared to be so cute…… It was an incomprehensible mystery.

“Great lord! Great lord! Please sign here!”

The lead witch courteously held out a parchment.

“Us Berbere sisters transparently disclose our travel fees to all of our customers. No matter what happens, we do not ask for additional payments later on!”

The witch, as if she was very proud, broadened her shoulders.

“.....”

On the other hand, the complexion of his highness Dantalian, as he was looking down at the parchment, was boundlessly dark. What could possibly be written on it that would make him like that. I took a glance over his shoulder.

Berber Witch Sisters

We shall always treat out customers honestly and kindly

** Wind protection magic: Only 2 gold*

** Temperture control magic: Only 1 gold*

** Sound control magic: Small sum of 4 silver*

** Beautiful singing and fantastical scenery magic: Only 1 gold*

** Hot honey wine that can melt your insides: Small sum of 2 silver*

** Each escort: Only 3 gold x 12 people = 36 gold*

Hm.

It felt a bit expensive, but it was still within the permissible range. We were hiring 12 witches who all had a triphyllous badge. Even if we were paying a somewhat large amount, it was okay.

“Hehe. We calculated the price after thoroughly checking the current market.”

The lead witch must be confident too. She was smiling

cheerfully.

“In total it is 41 gold and 1 silver. In the honor and glory of being able to attend your great lordship, we ‘ll just shave that 1 silver off. 41 gold coins. Aha, if it’s this then it’s almost nothing!”

“.....”

Huh?

The edge of his highness’ mouth had become stiff.

It was barely enough that only I had noticed it. I couldn’t figure out why he was like this.

Surely, the person who had made more than 50,000 gold from selling the cure to the disease wouldn’t be stingy about this amount of money. A few days ago he had even wasted 1,600 gold on buying a useless ring…….

“Could you wait a moment. I have something I must discuss with my vassal.”

His highness Dantalian put the witches behind him. Then, as if he was going to whisper into my ear again, he lowered his head. At this point, I don’t feel like warning him anymore.

“What is it, your highness.”

“Why does it cost 41 gold just to get a lift on a broom once? This is a rip-off. This is a rip-off for sure!”

For a moment, I was speechless.

To have really been stingy about the money.

“.....Excuse this one, but that is a fitting, and thus appropriate, employment fee. Please consider the fact that this is not only a transportation fee, but an escort fee as well. 12 of the most elite witches. Even if we were to be assaulted by injustice during the flight, they will easily be able to repel the threat.”

“Damn, shit. My blood like money.....”

With shaking hands, his highness Dantalian opened his money pouch.

It was strange.

Due to my curiosity I couldn't help but ask him.

“Your highness. Why is your highness grinding your teeth over some gold coins? There's 50,000 Libra stored in the vault. And there's still 25,000 herbs left to be sold. Also, did your highness not readily spend 1,600 gold coins on something recently.”

“Do you really not understand?”

His highness Dantalian glared at me.

His voice was immensely serious. It was the tone he used when he was not being a lazy bum but a cruel level-headed schemer.

I automatically became nervous. Was there perhaps

something that I had missed?

His highness opened his lips.

“Does the decrease of my money not mean the less time I’d be able to play at my leisure and not work?”

“.....eh?”

I’m sorry.

I couldn’t hear him correctly.

“If I were to go into the cave and swing a pickax all day, then I’d earn 1 silver. If I were to try to earn 41 gold, then that meant I’d have to mine for 205 days. 205 days of playing all gone due to one trip!”

“.....”

“Now. Do you understand why I’m being a miser? The ring assisted in providing a comfortable life for myself, so I had held back tears and bought it. How could some trip compare to that!”

“.....”

It was for a single moment, but.

His highness Dantalian looked like a larva that was infesting rotten food.

Was it truly a good idea to serve his highness as a vassal?

I started to lose confidence in my own decision.

□ *Weakest Demon Lord, Rank 71st, Dantalian*
Empire Calendar: Year 1505, Month 8, Day 16
Niflheim, Hermes' Plaza

The flight took 8 hours.

Honestly, it was no different to torture. Once again, I missed the scientific advancements of my original world.

To sit behind a witch on a broom. In words it sounded simple, but this hurt my buttocks tremendously. After arriving in Niflheim I couldn't stand properly for fair amount of time. For this kind of trip to be 41 gold. I wanted to demand a refund immediately.

“Well done everyone. I was considering buying you all a beer for delivering us here safely, would that be okay?”

To keep a good face on even in this situation, was the bastard so-called social life. Was it not horrible? Was it

not even more horrible that the witches had cheered
“Thank you very much!” at my offer?

We know a good place, the witches said and guided us there.

The place was a plaza. At the edge of the large plaza, many pubs and bars were lined up together. Even at a slight glance, you could see over 200 customers seated outside and drinking beer. It seemed like all of the bars shared the seats outside.

“This is the Temple of Hermes Plaza. It is Niflheim’s main tourist attraction. It is also the only place you can drink beer without having to worry about one’s race and social status.”

The witch chatted pleasantly.

“This place has taken the name of the Temple of Hermes that was in ruins here. Can your lord see the wreckage over there? That is a vestige of the temple.”

“It seems to have been preserved because of some historical value.”

“Ahaha, my apologies but that is not so. 12 years ago a group fight erupted. A bunch of dumb trolls and minotaurs got drunk and started a big fight. Because of that everything became completely devastated. The very next day, the governor of Niflheim created a law that

stated, murder that occurs in a table with more than 7 people gathered, while being drunk, will be declared as innocent. Well, in other words, it was basically telling people, ‘next time you get drunk and decide to start a ruckus, we’re not even going to find the culprit for you, so take care of yourself.’”

“……That is a surprisingly novel law.”

“Our governor is a bit passionate.”

The witch nodded.

“In a serious sense, you could say the governor is a person who can display ingenuity. The ruins being left here like so is meant to be a warning.”

“Don’t mess around?”

“Something like that—.”

We went to whatever seat was nearby and sat down.

A palm sized fairy flew over to take our orders. It felt like the fairy was terrified of the witches as they weren’t able to lift their head as smoothly as they did earlier. Witches may have been treated as slaves with their souls taken by Demon Lords, but they also had an incredible power so they couldn’t be treated lightly.

Shortly after, fairies in a line formation air lifted our beers to us. We each took a glass and lifted it up.

“You all did a good job today. Despite being attacked

by sirens mid-flight, you were able to repel them swiftly. I shall praise that. We were able to arrive here safely all thanks to you sisters. I'd like to make a toast to the Berbere sisters."

"“The Berbere sisters!”"

Clang

The beer glasses made a satisfying clanging sound as they hit one another.

The drinking party progressed merrily.

After finding out that Shakespeare was never born in this world, I immediately went into an impromptu one-man play of <Macbeth> and <Romeo and Juliet>.

Reciting the lines from start to finish like I did in elementary school was probably difficult to do at this point. But it was easy to put in a decent amount of dramatic effect as I told the story. The witches became entranced as I performed with a face full of sorrow.

".....Finally, Juliet took Romeo's hand in her own. A cold hand. There was warmth, but the heat was slowly draining away. Juliet, wanting to feel even the smallest amount of that warmth, placed the back of her lover's hand against her cheek......"

"“.....”"

All 12 witches were with bated breaths.

Lapis Lazuli appeared to be composed while holding her beer glass, however, that glass had been empty for quite a while now. Even Lapis Lazuli had been captivated by my improvised play.

“However, the back of that hand had soon become cold as well. Juliet shed a tear. Aah, where has my lover gone? Why is his body so cold? Desperately, to feel even the smallest amount of warmth, Juliet searched through Romeo’s body…… but alas, she could no longer find the warmth of her beloved which she had longed for. Aah, Romeo, oh sweet Romeo. I can no longer feel your warmth…….”

“Uh, aah.”

Tears were starting to brim in the witches’ eyes.

If you looked around, it wasn’t only our table that was quiet, but the other seats around us were strangely silent as well. I could sense that other people had turned their ears to me.

I was certain. I was grabbing hold of the hearts of approximately 30 people.

Modern people already knew full well of the story of <Romeo and Juliet>, thus they weren’t able to get into the story with a fresh feeling. However, these people were different. It was the first time for these people of

the demon world to ever hear such an intense love story. Of course, the immersion level would be different if you compared the two.

Forbidden romance was always a popular theme.

I drew out a mournful voice.

“Oh, but what was this? Reaching the end of final moments, Juliet was able to discover a place of warmth from her lover. The lips. There was still a faint feeling of warmth drifting from his mouth. Shedding tears, Juliet pressed her lips against her lover’s. There was nothing more warm…… more tender…… more soft. But, Juliet knew. That the tenderness of her lover’s lips too, will fade away like a midsummer night’s dream.”

I paused.

A terrified stillness reigned over the drinking party.

At the highest zenith.

After looking at the tears falling from the witches, while pleasantly on the inside, but with a tragic tone on the outside, I continued.

“Juliet muttered. If this was so, then take action before the warmth has faded. Before witnessing the death of my lover, cover a death with another……. Juliet held up Romeo’s dagger.”

“Aah, aaah!”

The witches covered their mouths with their hands.
They had finally realized the ending of the story.
Their eyes were filled with shock.

“Juliet shouted. Oh dagger, it is nice to see you. My heart shall be your sheath! ……and Juliet stabbed the dagger deep into her own chest.”

“Ah, aah!”

The witches had eventually embraced each other.
Mm.

I was incredibly pleased.

To be able to control people’s emotions with my acting ability. To make them feel sad, happy, hope, and despair, this was what truly gave me a reason to live. The stress that had piled up during our flight here melted like an ice under the sun.

My second half little sister had heavily criticised me about this before, saying that this was a perverted preference.

I couldn’t really understand her.

I was only gifting people with pleasure for free.

Look carefully. The witches were not able to handle the tragedy and were shuddering, Lapis Lazuli may have still been expressionless, but she was holding onto her glass tightly, and even the drinkers around us were

letting out groans. Was this not a beautiful and harmonious scene?

That was why, I shall make them happier.

While grinning on the inside, I spoke.

“Blood flowed from Juliet’s chest. She could feel her own blood. Juliet’s vision started to fade…….”

“N-No.”

Someone had faintly emitted a moan.

How could they react so purely.

Truthfully, it felt worthwhile teasing, no, I mean, being of service to them.

“……Finally. Juliet pressed her face against Romeo’s body. Her lover’s body was immensely warm. In truth, it was because of the blood flowing from Juliet. However, Juliet, who had already lost all her senses, could only feel it as the tenderness coming from her lover’s body……. A blessing as it was a tragedy. A tragedy as it was a blessing……. Juliet smiled faintly. At last, submerged in her own blood. With her face lied on top of her beloved’s body. Slowly, ever so slowly…… her soft eyes closed.”

Close curtain.

END.

…….

A moment of silence.

“Juliet is so pitiful——!”

The witches shouted together.

The ending without any hopes or dreams had impacted heavily onto their consciousness. The twelve of them immediately started to voice their complaints.

“It can’t be! That can’t happen!”

“Waaah, waaah…….”

“Lord, great lord! The two become happy in the end, right? Some amazing warlock appears with a ‘tadah!’ and revives Romeo and Juliet, right!?”

I felt gleeful by their fervent cries.

Thank you for responding so fervidly, audience.

But the one thing I loved most in the world was showing people, who were chanting for a happy ending, the cruel truth of the hopeless reality.

“Sadly…… that kind of luck never befell those two.”

“S-Surely?”

“Yes.”

I nodded.

The witches had miserable expressions on their faces, as if they were just told the news by the International Union for Conservation of Nature, that sea otters were on the brink of extinction.

I smiled.

“Romeo and Juliet, without being able to be revived, died forever.”

“Huaaaaaaang!”

The witches lamented at the top of their lungs.

Right now, a scar that would last forever had appeared on their hearts.

I believed that scars made people grow. In short, by providing them with this single scar, I was also presenting them a stepping stone to grow as an individual. In the distant future, these witches will probably look into the past and thank me. That thanks to his highness Dantalian’s deep consideration, they were able to mature further as a person…….

The results of my education took effect rather quickly.

【Your devilish performance has captivated the people!】

【Witch Humbaba’s affection went up by 11.】

【Witch Stheno’s affection went up by 12.】

【Witch Euryale’s affection went up by 9.】

A large amount of notice windows came pouring down.

Excluding one witch, the affection rate went up for all of them by an incredible amount. There was no doubt. The witches had been deeply moved by my romance stories. As evidence, they kept shedding warm tears.

“Lady Macbeth, Juliet they…….”

“There’re only dirty travesties in the world…….”

“I’m not going to believe in something like religion now…….”

Was this not amazing?

This gloomy color of despair was a color that befitted people.

Like a religious sect leader for a new religion, I was looking down at the young lambs with satisfaction. That was it. Throw away your hopes for the outside world and shut yourself inside. That way everything will be alright.

Lapis Lazuli, who was seated beside me, let out a sigh.

“This one must admit, your highness is the same as ever.”

“I know. Consistently being this refreshing is my charm.”

“This one thinks that your highness consistently being rotten to the core is a fault.”

“Hoo, that’s why the jealousy of a dull-witted mind is

quite vulgar.”

I raised the corners of my mouth.

Lapis Lazuli was looking at me with dead eyes.

It was fine. Her expression may have been like that, but inside, she as well had been moved by my eloquence. It probably wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that she was captivated. It was just that she was embarrassed to display her inner feelings…….

【Lapis Lazuli's affection went down by 1.】

I was wrong.

Lapis Lazuli was much further from being two-faced.

Be it shyness or embarrassment, these kinds of squishy emotions never existed in this impervious succubus in the first place.

“Hm hm. This time a bit more brighter story…….”

“Ooi! The reception is completely terrible!”

It was at the moment I had cleared my throat to change the topic.

On the other side of the plaza came a crashing sound, followed by a noisy racket. Our group, as if we had promised to do so previously, turned our gaze together towards that location.

“The alcohol tastes terrible, and the seats are hard! You don’t even have any common courtesy towards your customers! To want to receive payment with this, are you actually trying to do business!?”

“My apologies. My sincere apologies, your highness.”

A young’un was shouting at an old dwarf.

The dwarf’s face was covered in wrinkles. His clothes were rather decent. He was most likely the owner of one of the bars. The dwarf was on the ground and bowing his head over and over again.

“Because our lowly employees were unable to recognize your highness…….”

“Ha. That’s why every old bastard should just die.”

Smack

The young man had kicked the flank of the old dwarf.

The old man let out a shout and fell over.

“To try to do business when there’s mold in your brain!”

Kick.

“Look at your entertainment, it’s pathetic!”

Another kick.

Irrational violence was taking place in public.

The atmosphere in the plaza became cold. However, there was not even a single person that tried to stop it.

As if everyone had made a silent agreement to stay out of the violence that was happening before them.

The taste of alcohol quickly vanished. The tipsy state I was in for drinking beer had steadily cooled off. It wasn't a good type of cool feeling, but an unpleasant coolness.

"Who is that laughable man?"

"Rank 72nd Demon Lord, Andromalius."

Lapis Lazuli whispered.

"Demon Lord?"

I narrowed my brows.

Now that I looked carefully, I could see a small horn on that man's forehead.

The horn on the back of my head was small enough to be nearly covered by my hair, but that man's horn was even less than that. If I did not know he was a Demon Lord, I would have mistaken it for some large pimple.

"Yes. Andromalius spends most of his time in the Niflheim casino throughout the entire year. He is famous for using his title as a Demon Lord to torment the people."

"So he's like the neighborhood bully."

I sneered.

Demon Lord Andromalius appeared in the game so I knew well about him.

If Dantalian was the practice boss, then he was the tutorial boss. He was a small-fry that pitifully gets killed by the level 1 hero.

Misery loved company.

Whether it was Andromalius or Dantalian, we were both on the level of being treated like a rice fish, so it would be a good idea if we were to support each other, but——

There was a severe difference between me and this wastrel.

Demon Lord Andromalius ‘awakens’ the hero.

In the prologue, the protagonist is assaulted by demons.

Except the protagonist, the townspeople and his entire family end up dying. If you chose to play as a male character, then your little sister. If you chose to play as a female character, then your big brother is sacrificed.

No matter what side, the protagonist loses someone important to him. Thus, burning with the desire for revenge, he vows ‘I will kill every last single Demon Lord on this continent’…….

“Hmm.”

The culprit that gives birth to the monster known as the hero.

That was the future that lied ahead for that man across the plaza who was abusing that old man.

The current year was 1505 on the Empire calendar. The year that the hero’s village gets attacked was 1506 on the Empire calendar.

It would by all means only be appropriate to do something before this year has passed. If not, then it meant that some kid in a mountain valley will suddenly awaken as a hero. Getting rid of a variable like the hero early on would be a sensible decision if I wanted to continue living the remainder of my life peacefully and lazily.

It was then.

With a ‘tiring’, an alarm rang and windows rose up.

The choices were as if they were bringing out my inner thoughts.

【1. Become friendly with Andromalius.】

【2. Murder Andromalius.】

I placed a hand on my chin.

.....Yes. The first choice was favorable.

After becoming friendly with Andromalius, I would induce him to more thoroughly attack the hero's village. Eliminate the source of the problem. The tactic of getting rid of the dangerous sprout in advance was always valid.

On the other hand, the second choice was radical.

To kill Andromalius and thus ridding the cause of the problem entirely, the direction of that plan itself was not wrong. The problem was the ripple effect.

‘ A Demon Lord has murdered another Demon Lord.’

Due to such an incident, people would gather their attention onto me. People's gazes would uselessly be focused on myself. As a solution, this caused too much commotion.

I preferred dealing with problems a bit more quietly. Such as assassination. That side was more to my preference. However, I didn't even know where to hire an assassin..... Did I have to select number 1?

Looking at the cold atmosphere enveloping the plaza, I could tell that Andromalius had no popularity. The demon races here seemed to despise that lecher. It was a problem. If I were to get on friendly terms with Andromalius here, then my own image would fall as well. Reputation was like the life line of politicians. If

possible, I wanted to keep that as clean as possible.

But, was any choice besides 1 attainable? To murder Andromalius and also avoid receiving attention. Could I make such an ideal result happen……? It was impossible to completely avoid the attention. But if I was able to shift the gaze to somewhere else…….

“Your highness?”

Lapis Lazuli’s voice brought me out from my thoughts. I swiftly turned my head.

“Lala. Do you still have the ring on you right now?”

“Yes? ……This one does have it on for now.”

“Let me confirm it real quick.”

Without any warning, I grabbed Lapis Lazuli’s left hand. I could feel a small bump over her white glove.

There was a ring on her annular finger.

Publicly, Lapis Lazuli was known as my concubine.

Demon Lord Dantalian had fallen for his half-breed lover so much, that he didn’t turn to political affairs. That kind of rumor. Of course, it was nothing more than a wild rumor that we had made on purpose.

The ring was bought in order to further flesh out that distorted rumor. A few days ago, I had spent 1,600 gold to purchase two luxurious rings.

They were a pair of couple rings with a 5 carat azure

colored diamond embedded into each of them. There were writings on the back written in Frankish. 'I do not desire anyone but you (AUTRE NE VUEIL).'

In other words, a typical engagement vow.

In the public eye, Demon Lord Dantalian was the world's biggest fool. A simpleton who had bought a ring for his lover as soon as he had gained some money. But look at this now. It was good that I had prepared this beforehand. A use for the ring has already appeared. No matter when, an ounce of prevention was worth a pound of cure.....

"Don't think you'll ever be able to do business in this neighborhood ever again, you old fart! You piece of moldy trash."

Andromalius was still abusing that old man.

There was an evil smile on that guy's face. It seemed he quite enjoyed beating people up. That naive complexion was enviable.

Regardless, playing by yourself will quickly get boring, Andromalius. Please do let me partake in your fun activities.

Do not worry. I have a knack for making drinking parties delightful. A mere moment ago, with my ornate eloquence, I was able to petrify the witches. You too,

will soon be flailing on the floor convulsing with laughter. I shall make you into an amazing supporting character to a romance story.

Finally, I confirmed with Lapis Lazuli.

“Lazuli. Does Andromalius have a group that is protecting him?”

“As far as this one knows, there are none.”

“Is there another Demon Lord he is peculiarly friendly with?”

“There are none. Even amongst Demon Lords, Andromalius is treated as a disgraceful failure.”

“Splendid.”

In other words, I had nothing to worry about.

I raised my beer glass.

One. Two. Three.

After counting down in my mind, I dropped the glass——

□ *Mixed Blood, Lapis Lazuli*

Empire Calendar: Year 1505, Month 8, Day 16

Niflheim, Hermes' Plaza

Crash

The glass shattered.

For a moment, everyone's gaze focused onto here.

There were over 200 people in this plaza, but no one had spoken a word. Due to the silence, the sound of a glass shattering echoed loudly…… It was a mere single glass, but it was so loud that it could reach the furthest corners of the plaza.

“Aaang?”

Andromalius looked over here.

His slanted eyes resembled that of a fox and were detestable to look at. You could see his vulgar personality and foul temper just from his gaze.

“What are you supposed to be? You aren’t going to lower your eyes?”

Andromalius spoke towards his highness Dantalian.

His highness Dantalian was unresponsive. What was he thinking? I turned to carefully check his highness’ complexion—and my spine became cold.

It was **that face**.

The expression he made when he had discovered prey and was waiting for it with ease.

It wasn’t the deadbeat face that he normally had. A faint smile was drifting around the edges of his highness’ lips. It was the face he made when an ominous scheme, a wicked plot had formed in his head.

It seemed that the other party did not recognize his highness Dantalian. It was not weird. His highness’ horn was buried under his hair so it was barely visible.

Andromalius spit on the floor.

“Wow, look at that. He’s not lowering his eyes at all.”

After kicking the old dwarf one more time, he made his way towards us. The way he swayed looked as if he was some wild cat that had found a new toy to play with.

The demon races who were sitting nearby cautiously backed away as he passed. They probably didn’t want to

get caught up in the trouble.

On the other hand, the Berbere witches silently stayed in their seats. They had been hired by his highness Dantalian. Their pride wouldn't allow them to do something like leaving his highness behind and running away.

“To see some peasants with no ethics.”

It seemed that he was displeased that the witches had not greeted him despite having seen him. Andromalius narrowed his brows.

“If you meet a Demon Lord then you should at least greet them with a bow, but what is this? Why are you being conceited with your chins held up?”

Andromalius strongly grabbed the hair of one of the witch's hair. The witch let out a pained moan.

“Uuh…….”

The witch's name was Beatrice. I had heard that it had been a long time since she had participated in an escort trip, as she had concealed herself for several decades. Witches had itchy feet so it was common for them to go wandering for more than a hundred years; for her to end up getting involved with Andromalius subsequently to taking a request after a long period of time, that witch had terrible luck.

“Oii, slaves. A Demon Lord is here. It’s one of the honorable Demon Lords that gave you life and feeds you. You should be greeting me politely, and yet you’re not even budging from your seat.”

“Uh, uuh…….”

You could hear the sound of some hair ripping.

Despite that, the witch kept her mouth shut.

It was a problem of etiquette. If the witches were to greet Andromalius here, then they would be admitting that Andromalius was a higher class than that of his highness Dantalian. It was vital for these witches to maintain their respect to his highness.

“Hoh. Look at this.”

Andromalius smiled sadistically.

“The entire group of slaves have become mute. If your tongues are retarded then you should at least move your heads. Wow, all your necks are so stiff. Should this great one straighten them for you? Don’t refuse and…….”

“What a garbage like man.”

It was then that his highness Dantalian had opened his mouth.

Andromalius flinched.

“What?”

“I said you were a garbage-like man. I had thought it

was only your brain that was rotten, but it seems your ears have festered as well.”

You could sense the shock of the people in the plaza through the air.

Even I had thought for a second that I had misheard. Garbage? It was a word that was not allowed to be said to a Demon Lord in a public place. Andromalius’ face quickly distorted.

“How dare you say such thoughtless words to this great one…….”

“This is why delinquents with overinflated egos are pathetic. If you don’t have the money to pay for your drink, then apologize and leave. To find some fault and then proceed to beat up the elderly. It wasn’t enough that you had shamelessly advertised about your denseness in a loud voice, but you even went and picked on witches as well.”

His highness Dantalian laughed.

“And yet you still go around loudly calling yourself ‘great one’. This is quite the masterpiece. Andromalius. You are not a Demon Lord. You are nothing more than a rookie that was somehow born with a horn on their head.”

“Y-You bastard……?”

“The Gods truly are cruel. They made garbage-like you into a Demon Lord in this world. Even saintesses would resent the Gods if they were to see your dirty mug. As days go by, it couldn’t be helped if the amount of devout believers were to go down…….”

Andromalius’s complexion turned alternately pale and red.

If you looked carefully, then you could see that his shoulders were shaking. It was obvious. He had probably never received such severe insults in his entire life as a Demon Lord.

Andromalius shouted at the people around us.

“What are you all doing!? Why aren’t you taking this shameless man away immediately!?”

His highness Dantalian, as if he sincerely thought it was funny, snorted.

“See, is he not a masterpiece? He can’t even recognize a person of the same race right in front of him. Not only his ears, but his eyes must have had festered as well, to the point that it wouldn’t be enough to treat him like a corpse.”

“Same race……?”

His highness shrugged.

“I am Rank 71st, Demon Lord Dantalian. Referentially,

the witches that you had mistreated are the escorts I have hired for the day.”

“Rank 71st…….”

“Do apologize for having mistreated my precious bodyguards as you pleased.”

His highness lowered his beer glass.

“Do you understand? Sincerely apologize and leave. This may be difficult for the mentally challenged, but these are basic manners in society. Use this opportunity to learn.”

“Hah. And I was wondering what kind of incredible aristocrat you were supposed to be.”

Andromalius mocked triumphantly.

Despite the other person being his highness Dantalian, he was only higher by one rank. He was a small fry who didn’t have any remarkable talent and no reliable group behind his back. That was most likely what Andromalius was thinking.

That was foolish. There was nothing more idiotic than being careless while in front of his highness Dantalian.

His highness may normally be a severe deadbeat, but that was nothing more than a deceptive mask. His highness’ true self was actually a devilish fiend. He purposely leads the other party into being careless, and

then consumed them in a single moment.

Andromalius most likely did not know any of this. There was still a mean smile on the edge of his lips. He was like a warthog charging straight towards the edge of a cliff.

“Is that so. Is it Dantalian. Iyaaah, I heard you were on a roll these days. There was a rumor spreading that some fool had made an untouchability into his mistress. Yes. If you’re Dantalian…… then this must be that famous crossbreed.”

Andromalius now turned to look at me.

Did the target change from his highness to myself?

“The peasant that had fearlessly enticed a Demon Lord with their body! Sure enough. That hair of yours even resembles that vulgar bloodline of yours.”

Tap tap

Andromalius hit my cheek with his palm.

His hand stung fairly. He may had been tapping me playfully, but I could feel his real intentions.

“I really can’t understand your preference. Why would you want to score this kind of girl? Her appearance is decent, but the actually important bloodline is just foul.”

The act of changing his target to me was an okay decision.

Demon lords may have been sacred and inviolable, but they were not sacred to other Demon Lords. In other words, they were equal. If a Demon Lord were to hit another Demon Lord then troublesome common laws would intervene. On the other hand, it was okay to freely strike an untouchability.

The reason why Andromalius had started to aim at me lay within here too. He had judged that it would be difficult to dominate with his rank alone, so he had quickly found another weak target.

“Or is it perhaps that? Your bottom mouth is just that impressive so you were able to captivate that Dantalian?”

Andromalius started snickering.

“I say. This great one is considering to give you my royal grace, but what do you think? For a person born as a peasant to be able to lay 2 Demon Lords. There is no honor greater than this!”

“.....”

“Kuha! On one side is the rank 71st imbecile. And on the other side is the bitch born by some broad being raped by a lowly human. Is this not the masterpiece? Huh?”

Abruptly.

Andromalius slapped my cheek.

There was no playfulness in it this time. It purely contained the intent to be violent. My head ended up turning because of the excessively strong hit.

—That hurt quite a lot.

However, it was trivial.

Since a young age, I had been exposed to violence so many times that I had become dulled to it. There was a time I had stones tossed at me by the village people on a daily basis. Compared to that, Andromalius' hit was like that of a child.

People may not be able to get accustomed to pain, but people can get accustomed to bearing the pain. That is what people are. And I am one of those people.

“.....”

I returned my gaze forward.

As soon as I did so, the laughter in Andromalius' voice stopped.

“Aaang? The hell are you looking at?”

Andromalius slapped me once more. It felt like he had put all of his weight into his hand that time.

Unfortunately, at this point, it was proven that Andromalius did not spend his time exercising. His hit wasn't heavy at all.

I looked forward again.

“……Both master and servant are annoying!”

Andromalius bellowed out.

He swung his arm over and over again. And each time my head was moved by the force. But it was useless. Since it'd return back to its original position.

“Gr, grrrr……!”

Seeing that, Andromalius' face slowly started to collapse into rage. To not be able to contain his childish rage, how low. It was at the point where I couldn't bear to watch him.

I wonder if his highness Dantalian had thought the same thing, he had been chuckling besides me.

“What a sight this is, Andromalius. To be an honorable Demon Lord and yet be unable to make a single untouchability submit to you. This is unheard of. Are you sure it wasn't a mistake by the Gods that you had become a Demon Lord? Originally, were you not supposed to be born as a peasant?”

Andromalius' face became red hot.

“T-This great one…… this great one……!”

“It's okay. You do not have to make excuses. Even Gods have times where they doze off while working.”

His highness Dantalian smiled.

“However, this shall be the last time that I warn you.

Do not lay your hand on my beloved again. And sincerely apologize for beating my escorts and my lover.”

“Don’t make me laugh!”

Smack

Andromalius, with his fist, hit me with all his strength. I fell back from my chair and rolled onto the floor. The witches let out a scream.

“.....”

My mouth was tingling from the impact. With my tongue, I could taste something like iron in my mouth. I took out a napkin and wiped the corners of my mouth. The napkin became crimson with blood.

I raised my body slowly.

“The death penalty for you!”

Andromalius was waving his finger at me.

There was hatred in his eyes. Was it not surprising? How someone could despise another person so much after having only just met them. They were setting their emotions at an **unimaginably low price**.

Unfortunately, as a merchant, I could not respect the half-wit who was trying to sell their product for dirt cheap.

“The death penalty! You’ll receive capital punishment! Something like an untouchability, we can give you a

summary conviction without even having a trial……!

Even if you were to die by this great one's hands, you can't resist! Do you know that!? Apologize for acting so impudently before this great one!”

Death sentence, death sentence. He was noisy.

To only be able to spout the same word over and over again. That showed the man's level of intelligence. A 5-year-old goblin would probably display a more diverse vocabulary. I, with the same expressionless face, stared back at Andromalius.

“This bitch, till the very end!”

Andromalius made his way towards me.

“Fine! I'll tear your mouth right now, bitch! Go to hell and repent on—hiiii, guaaaaaak!?”

However, he was not able to even take 5 steps.

All the people in the plaza let out a scream at once. Andromalius had fallen to the floor. From his neck, dark red blood poured out.

“Uh, uuah? Aaaaack!?”

Andromalius instinctively moved his hands to block the wound.

The blood volume was serious. It wasn't some cute scratch that you could just cover with the palm of your hand and stop it. Andromalius, looking at the amount of

blood on his hand, let out a cry.

It was a single blow aimed at a vital point.

In order to give certain death in one strike.

Seeing that, I thought that it really—.

Really befitted his highness Dantalian's hunting method.

"How regrettable."

His highness Dantalian wiped the blood off of his dagger.

"To treat my warning as a trifling matter."

His highness Dantalian's carefreeness was boundless. Out of the hundreds of people in the entire plaza, his highness was the only one who was relaxed. As if he was far away from the buzzing atmosphere around us.

'Did this person really just stab Andromalius?'

To the point that people would inadvertently doubt themselves and think that.

Regardless, his highness was holding a blade in his hand which was dripping with blood. The dripping blood adamantly rid people of any doubt.

I wonder if it was because the person who had caused the incident was so relaxed. The plaza that was buzzing with noise a second ago, had started to quiet down. A suffocating silence fell over the plaza. In that silent air, his highness Dantalian's voice echoed lowly.

“Lapis Lazuli.”

“Yes, your highness.”

I immediately bowed my head.

“Recite the occasion a Demon Lord is allowed to attack another Demon Lord.”

“As this one is ordered to. For a Demon Lord to do harm to another Demon lord, one must first respectfully warn the other party twice. When the other party clearly ignores the warning, and proceeds to severely damage the honor of the first Demon Lord, then that Demon Lord may attack the other.”

A common law.

Because Demon Lords were sacred, they were free from earthly laws. However, if conflict were to occur between Demon Lords, then they had to be confined to the common laws. The common law that I had just recited was known as the 「Coctyus Warning」.

According to legends, if a person were to die then they had to cross over 5 rivers. Acheron, Coctyus, Phlegethon, Lethe, and Styx…… Coctyus was the second river. If a deceased were to cross over the Coctyus river, they would eventually reach Phlegethon, where instead of water it was a river of lava. Here people would fall into the river and have their souls lit aflame. That was why,

when giving the Coctyus Warning, it meant that you were telling the other party to back off before they got burned.

Andromalius groaned.

“C-Coctyus Warning……? Keuhk! You bastard, do you even know what nonsense you’re saying!?”

That kind of response was natural.

Normally, Coctyus Warning was only used in the events of a war. If a Demon Lord wanted to attack another Demon Lord’s base, then they had to send a declaration of war twice. The warning was used in this kind of situation.

It’s original purpose was to prevent war. By declaring that sudden attacks without having sent a declaration of war beforehand was illegal, in conclusion, had the effect of restraining conflict. His highness Dantalian was cleverly abusing this common law.

Andromalius howled.

“Keuk, it’s the end for you bastard! Dantalian! The end…… The other Demon Lords won’t let this slide easily…… keub! It’s too late to cry and beg for forgiveness! This great one will never forgive you!”

“The one at their end is you.”

His highness Dantalian stepped on the back of

Andromalius' hand. The sound of bones breaking echoed. Andromalius cried out even more sorrowfully and flailed on the floor.

“Rank 72nd Demon Lord. The crimes you have committed are as followed. First, you had mocked and beat the escorts I had hired without any reason. Second, you had irrationally assaulted my lover.”

His highness Dantalian looked around and spoke in a loud voice.

“I had respectfully requested for Andromalius to stop, but he had ignored me. He had not only threatened my safety, but he had harmed my honor as well. Everyone here is a witness!”

The people in the plaza started to mumble amongst one another.

Andromalius was most likely no longer in his highness' thought anymore. His highness Dantalian was aiming to drag these people here in as witnesses.

“Look here!”

Taking off his gloves and throwing them aside, he grabbed my left hand as well, followed by taking off the glove that was on that hand. And as if to show the world, his highness raised my left hand high.

The ring on my annular finger.

A blue diamond shone brightly and sparkled.

A similar ring was on his highness' annular finger as well.

"I am a Demon Lord. This youngster is a peasant. Us two are not permitted to be wedded. However, swearing to the Goddess Aphrodite, I, Dantalian, the rank 71st Demon Lord, declare my love for this girl! This ring is proof of that! Even if society were to forbid our marriage, our hearts are already connected!"

The people let out a gasp.

A Demon Lord had confessed his love for a peasant. In a public plaza and in front an audience of hundreds of people, at that.

From tomorrow on, the high societies were going to be flipped over. The gossip of the passionate love between a Demon Lord and an untouchability will be talked about everywhere. It was a natural phenomenon. Regardless of the generation, people were bound to get excited by the topic of 'forbidden love'.

That was where his highness' deception laid.

In this grand love story, the character known as Andromalius fell into being a mere supporting role.

A crafty trick.

If his highness Dantalian were to simply murder

Andromalius, what would have happened? Inevitably, it would become nothing more than a murder case.

But if he were to commit murder for ‘the peasant he loved’, then the story was different. The monotonous murder play would change into a forbidden love performance.

His highness and myself were Romeo and Juliet.

Andromalius was the supporting character, Tybalt, who gets murdered by Romeo.

The truth was easily distorted.

“T-To fall in love with an riffraff. What madness. Insane…… A disgrace of a Demon Lord!”

Andromalius let out a pained groan.

That poor man had no idea. He was going to face his end without knowing what kind of scheme he was being swept up in. I felt a touch of sympathy for him.

“You bastard. You don’t deserve the right to be called the same race as this great one. Hierarchy is a sacred order. For you to dare go against the order of nature……!”

“I wonder. Order of nature is it?”

His highness lowered his gaze towards Andromalius.

A quiet, but horrifying whisper flowed from his highness’ lips.

“Let me tell you what the true order of nature is. Rookie. It’s the law of the jungle. If a cat were to go against a tiger, then the only result would be death. The truth of the world is quite the simple and boring thing. Don’t you think?”

It was then that Andromalius’ complexion turned pale. He had probably now barely realized that his highness Dantalian was truly going to kill him.

But it was too late.

“That is why I personally prefer lies over truth. Like how a bare face would require make-up, it is essential for life to have some spice.”

“S-Spare…….”

“Wrong choice.”

Without inquiring into the right or wrong, his highness swung his dagger.

The blade stabbed into Andromalius’ throat just like that.

Blood flooding into Andromalius’ windpipe forced him to vomit blood.

“Gua, guuhaaak…….”

“Spare me? That is a terribly boring line. In our already boring lives, that only further tortures us in agony. I see boredom as the sin of humanity, and find it

similar to that of a harmful insect that deserves to be exterminated.”

His highness whispered.

It was in such a low volume that only I, who was sitting right besides him, could hear it.

“Next time, come back after practicing better dying words, you third-rate actor.”

“.....”

Andromalius shuddered.

Like a doll who had its strings cut, his head fell limp.

Was the last emotion that flashed in his eyes fear, or was it hatred for his highness Dantalian. I thought both options were very much possible.

His highness straightened his back and glanced around the plaza. No one tried to make eye contact with his highness. They were all instinctively trying to avoid his highness’ eyes. Everyone had been consumed by his highness Dantalian’s composed atmosphere.

It was amazing. His highness Dantalian was single-handedly overwhelming this large plaza.

Until now, I had thought that a king’s grandeur was nothing more than an abstract concept. However, after looking at his highness, I understood. His highness had something that could overwhelm the audience.

He was not dominating the citizens with fear. He was not attracting people with prestige. Something much different was lurking…….

Why he didn't show off this ability in the past. How he was enlightened with a tremendous amount of talent after overcoming a life or death situation with the adventurers. The current me could not answer any of this.

However.

“You held on well, Lala.”

“Pardon?”

“My vassal should never thoughtlessly submit to another individual. When you refused to turn your gaze till the very end, despite being hit by Andromalius, I was quite impressed. You are a brilliant woman.”

His highness laughed slyly.

Hearing that light laughter, I thought.

In the end, it was not the wrong choice to serve under his highness.

For the first time today, I was certain.

□ *Keuncuska Executive, Miser Goblin, Torukel*
Empire Calendar: Year 1505, Month 8, Day 16
Keuncuska Firm Headquarters, Highest floor

The highest floor of the headquarters.

It was a place where only a small handful of executives had access to.

No one else was here in this large room. Only a bunch of coffins were spread out across the room…… At glance, the amount was over thirty.

“Keruk.”

No matter how many times I saw this, it gave me a feeling of ominousness. Vampires nowadays claimed that coffins were too old-school and did not use them anymore. They all properly slept on beds. Yet again, I realized that Ivar Lodbrok was an old chap who had fallen behind on the times.

It was at the time I had turned my head to read a book.

“—Mr. Torukel.”

“Oh God!”

I jumped in surprise and turned around.

A short witch was smiling back wickedly.

“You look like you’ve seen a ghost.”

“If you’re here then say so!”

“I’m sorry. I couldn’t help but want to tease you the moment I saw you, Mr. Torukel.”

“Keruruk, I felt like my heart would drop…… but what’s with that weird way of speech?”

The witch walked in strides towards a black coffin.

If I recalled correctly her name was Beatrice. She was originally a witch that was part of the Berbere Sisters. Several decades ago, after conflicting with Ivar Lodbrok, she was captured by this side. Yesterday, they went out saying that they were going to dig up information on Lapis Lazuli. In other words, act as a spy.

“My way of speech?”

The witch sat on top of the coffin. Her voice may have been coy but her face was all smiles. That pervert. They were most definitely enjoying this situation.

“What about my speech, Mr. Torukel the Miser?”

“It’s disturbing enough that I feel like my stomach is twisting…… jeez. There’s no point in nagging since you won’t listen anyways. Whatever. Tell me about Lapis Lazuli’s movements. You’re back since you were able to gain new information, are you not?”

“Please do not be in such a rush, Mr. Torukel. Men who push women are not popular. Since you’re always like that, that’s why you haven’t had a wife for over a hundred years.”

“I am voluntarily single!”

The witch burst out in laughter.

Even her laugh was witch-like. This was making me go mad.

“I wonder. There is one important thing I found out. Demon Lord Dantalian had fallen deeper in love with the succubus than we had originally thought. He even brazenly confessed his love for the girl in the middle of Hermes’ Plaza.”

“What?”

“Should I recite what he said word by word? ‘I am a Demon Lord. This youngster is a peasant. Us two are not permitted to be wedded. However, swearing to the Goddess Aphrodite, I, Dantalian, the rank 71st Demon Lord, declare my love for this girl.’”

I creased my brows.

To say those kind of lines in a public space, that didn't make any sense. There was a limit to how foolish a person could be. Even if Dantalian was a dullard who didn't know shame, would he really do such a thing?

"It's true. He even killed Andromalius claiming it was for the succubus."

"Andromalius? Don't tell me you're talking about the rank 72nd Demon Lord."

The witch made a bitter smile.

The fellow told me everything. About how Andromalius was causing a ruckus. How he had insulted the witches and assaulted Lapis Lazuli. And how Dantalian murdered Andromalius.....

"Dear god."

As I listened to the story, my mouth opened wider and wider.

The witch, as if she had understood my feelings, nodded.

"The streets of Niflheim are full of clamor. No matter where you go, people are talking about the love story between Demon Lord Dantalian and the peasant Lapis Lazuli. People are just falling at the feet of forbidden love."

“This doesn’t make sense. Even if Andromalius was the worst Demon Lord, he was still a Demon Lord by name. It’s not possible to just kill him like that!”

“Regrettably, the public of Niflheim are favoring Dantalian.”

The witch spoke flatly.

“Andromalius spent his time passing through the casinos behaving like a vandal, you already know this. If you excluded his standing, then there was nothing good about him. Obviously, his reputation was the worst. The majority of the citizens are saying that they’re delighted and are even toasting over it.”

“.....”

It wasn’t hard to imagine.

Complaints about Andromalius’ despicable antics would come regularly. Even if he’s a Demon Lord isn’t this too severe, does he not need to be restrained; this kind of talk would go over the city council from time to time. To sum it up, he was a headache for everyone.

There was also a fair amount of people who had died from being irrationally beaten by Andromalius. The family of the deceased were most likely praising Dantalian.

“.....The timing is too good.

“Yup—”

The witch nodded her chin.

Soon a large meeting for Demon Lords was going to be held. We were planning to attack Dantalian politically there. During the little remaining period of time before the conference, which was now, Dantalian was abruptly able to gain popularity with the people.

“Is this truly a coincidence?”

It was difficult to erase the doubt in my head. We couldn’t be certain that getting rid of Andromalius wasn’t planned. I gave a doubt filled gaze towards the witch.

“I wasn’t able to research that far in. However…….”

“However, the chances are high. Is what you’re saying.”

“Yup.”

The witch’s face became serious.

“Dantalian, as soon as Andromalius attacked his lover, used the Cocytus Warning as a pretext. As if he was waiting for it. This is an idea that’s difficult to think of on the spot.”

“Kuuuh.”

Then this wasn’t a murder by chance.

Everyone knew that Andromalius wandered here and there in Niflheim. The places he went to were also

limited. The casino, the red-light district, and the bar. These were it. The chances of coming across Andromalius was fairly high. Planning to murder him was not that hard either…….

“Don’t you think it’s funny?”

“Keruk? What?”

“For the past several years, no one had tried to stop Andromalius from making a disturbance. Only because he was a Demon Lord. Despite that, Dantalian had killed that troublemaker within 30 minutes of meeting him…….”

The witch smiled wryly.

“Andromalius grabbed my hair and pulled it as he pleased. It made me feel like I was some livestock instead of a person. Like a pig you could beat and play around with as you pleased.”

“…….”

“It was incredibly insulting.”

The witch’s pupil shined peculiarly.

This fellow clearly harbored hostility against the existence known as Demon Lords.

“He only had a higher status. When that incompetent man with no talent whatsoever pulled at my hair, it felt so unpleasant that I wanted to rip his throat out

and…….”

“Hey. I’m not disagreeing with your opinion at all, but.”

I spoke carefully.

“Speaking in a logical point of view, Demon Lords aren’t completely talentless. For starters, they’ve mastered the language of Babylon. And are they not able to understand and use every demon language since birth? Furthermore, their political symbolism…….”

“I have command over 36 languages of different races.”

“……I am knowledgeable of this. Anyways, Demon Lords have a religious mystique. To the majority, Demon Lords are the agents of Gods and they are also the greatest of priests.”

“So if someone were to order for a Demon Lord to die, then the one to have ordered the task would die instead?”

The witch laughed mockingly.

“Oh please. Mr. Torukel. Do not think while in the perspective of the people.”

The witch’s tone became solemn and a profound smile formed on her lips.

“The public are nothing more than a group of idiotic and unimaginative people.”

“I’m sorry, but I have to object against that. A group is superior to an individual. Even a hero can’t conquer the continent on their own.”

“So are you saying that we should follow the logic of the majority and use that to determine what’s right and wrong? Torukel. Our aristocrat miser goblin. That is not a very good tactic in our current situation.”

Taack

The fellow had snapped their finger.

And immediately after, the sound of a coffin opening up somewhere in the room echoed. With a dreary atmosphere, someone raised their upper body from the black coffin.

It was a girl wearing a servant outfit.

She slowly opened her eyes and looked this way.

The girl smiled coldly and moved her lips.

“Because we are larger in number.”

“……An individual’s opinion can be respected even in a society where majority logic is in common use. It is possible as long as one has even the smallest of refinement and consideration.”

“Oh, do you really think so?”

The servant lightly tapped the back of her hand. Promptly, another black coffin opened up and a figure

rose.

This time it was a man with the head of a wolf. It was a werewolf. The man growled deeply.

“That is possible when the minority has a decent amount of strength. However, in the demon world which we live in, there are at least over 470 orc tribes while there are only 2 remaining werewolf tribes. If disharmony were to happen between the two races, do you think that the millions of orcs would show consideration to the merely hundreds of werewolves? One could only plead for the orcs to have a decent amount of **refinement and consideration.**”

“.....”

The werewolf whistled.

As soon as he did so, all the remaining coffins opened up at the same time.

Each coffin had one person. A total of 33 personage raised their bodies.

Among them, an old gentlemen approached this way.

“The minority requires strength, Torukel. Especially someone like me, who is in a race with only two other vampires remaining, I have to be more cautious of my surroundings.”

“.....Ivar Lodbrok.”

A sigh came from my mouth.

That was his power as a true vampire and a puppeteer.

The ability to move his conscience to his slaves whenever he pleased.

Ivar Lodbrok had 32 slave dolls. Hence, it was possible for him to do 32 different tasks whenever he wanted. It was a closely guarded secret that only I, among the executives, knew of.

The demon world was currently controlled by the Demon Lords. No matter how rich you were, there was always the danger of being purged by the true people in power. That was why a person would have to set up safety precautions. That was what Ivar Lodbrok's 32 slave dolls were.

Even if a Demon Lord were to threaten us, Ivar Lodbrok could move his conscience around his slaves and stay alive till the very end. That was why Ivar Lodbrok hid these dolls in absolute secrecy. A secret that Demon Lords must not know.

.....Although, seeing the way he behaved, it felt like half the reason he did it was because it was a hobby.

"Hm. Everything seems to be fine."

Ivar, with a satisfied air around him, patted the dust

off his body.

“I was worried that a problem might occur because it had been a long time since I had moved my conscience around. I couldn’t be more refreshed.”

“That is a relief. After I was forced to witness an old man act like a young girl, my eye sockets and earholes ended up rotting. I mean, why are you so adept at copying how a **little girl talks?**”

Ivar Lodbrok raised his shoulders.

“What am I supposed to do when the conscience is affected by the body?”

Ivar shrugged.

“I request for you to understand, Torukel. In order to deceive the Berbere Sisters, acting is essential. They still do not know that Beatrice was taken by me.”

“Okay, that’s fine for the witches. But why did you have to behave like a girl and add honorifics while in front of me?”

“Of course, to enjoy watching your facial expression rot whenever I used honorifics.”

“Then it was your hobby!”

Ivar let out a laugh.

After laughing for a period of time, he became serious.

“.....Torukel. Think carefully. Even if they were to kill

Andromalius, Demon Lord Dantalian gets no profit.”

“What?”

“For a short, short period of time he will receive popularity from the citizens. But if you looked at it long-term, then the loss is going to be tremendous. The fact that he had taken an untouchable as a lover will remain as a smudge and continue to dirty his reputation. In conclusion, his political life will be shortened. He will be choking his own neck.”

I creased my brows.

“Then why did Dantalian kill Andromalius?”

Ivar shook his head side to side.

“Think bigger, Torukel.”

“Bigger?”

“In this incident, there is one person who would get an absolute gain. It is not Andromalius. It is not Dantalian either.”

“.....?”

It was a puzzle like statement.

Andromalius and Dantalian had clashed. Both sides did not gain any profit. Who here could…… aah. Was that it, was that what it was!

“Lapis Lazuli!”

My voice became louder on its own.

“Thanks to this affair, this was no different from Lapis Lazuli being officially accepted as the lover of a Demon Lord!”

“That is so. That succubus girl is the only one to take any gains.”

Ivar nodded.

“That girl had probably instructed Dantalian beforehand, that if Andromalius was to try and start a quarrel with them, then to use the Coctyus Warning as a pretext then murder him. Since Dantalian had fallen so deeply for that succubus, he would have more than gladly complied. And as they had planned, they encountered Andromalius…….”

I couldn’t believe it.

“Then, Lapis Lazuli did all that purely to only increase her own status……?”

“Indeed. She had played with two Demon Lords. Dantalian, of course, and Andromalius had probably unknowingly got swept away in her plot.”

“What a ludicrous woman…….”

I could feel my own voice trembling.

In contrast, Ivar muttered as if he was having fun.

“Is it not magnificent? A short time ago, that succubus was nothing more than a merchant. However, she was

able to obtain a large loan from our firm by fooling us, she was able to put Dantalian on her side, and now she was able to get rid of Andromalius…….”

“…….”

“I am genuinely touched. This succubus is like the embodiment of lust for power. For such a girl to have been born, this world is truly worth living.”

Ivar looked straight at me.

“Torukel. Our opponent is formidable. That succubus girl is competent enough to overcome her own wall of social status. She is cold-hearted and merciless.”

“…….”

“But she has yet to pass being anything more than a frail schemer. Lapis Lazuli’s position comes from Dantalian. If we purge Dantalian, then she would no longer be the lover of a Demon Lord or anything else. She would only be an arrogant Untouchability.”

That was an accurate call.

If you wanted to go for an admiral, then shoot the horse first.

Lapis Lazuli was currently on the horse known as Dantalian and was rushing forward with spirit. If you tied down Dantalian’s feet, then naturally her spirit will be cut as well.

“With no mistake. You have to tear them apart
……can you do this?”

“It’s okay to have my vow. Her highness Paimon has also completely agreed with our plan. If a one to ten thousand situation was to occur, then I will take all the responsibility.”

I stared back at Ivar Lodbrok seriously.

Once I did so, Ivar Lodbrok nodded.

Without asking who was going to start first, we recited the vow pledge.

“Oh great Keuncuska——”

“You shall repay blood with blood.”

This was a saying of our firm that boasted 400 years of history. In other words, we were shouldering 400 years of pride on this large meeting. Losing was unpardonable.

Lapis Lazuli. You may be an impressive heroine, but you are still a young sprout. We shall step on you thoroughly.

第 5 話

제일 화려한 서커스

The Most Extravagant Circus

□ *Weakest Demon Lord, Rank 71st, Dantalian*
Empire Calendar: Year 1505, Month 8, Day 20
Niflheim, Governors' Palace

The outside was bustling with noise.

In front of the main gate of a large palace, many carriages were lined up. Without pause, refined ladies and gentlemen got off their carriages. Their appearances and outfits all varied in style but there was one thing that they all had in common; they all had horns.

I was seated in a carriage and vacantly staring out the window.

“It doesn’t seem like a lot of Demon Lords are coming.”

“The attendance of the Walpurgis Night is not enforced. Demon Lords with the tendency of being single-minded will most likely not participate. Rank 1st

Demon Lord Baal and rank 2nd Demon Lord Agares will not attend.”

“Then why do I have to attend? So troublesome.”

“This meeting is being held in order to discuss the countermeasures for the plague. It would be difficult for your highness, who has a monopoly over the cure, to not participate.”

“So it’s a problem of people being too distinguished.”

A moment later, Lapis Lazuli muttered furtively in a low voice.

“……Your highness. As expected, this one shouldn’t go in together with your highness.”

“Are you still saying that?”

I grumbled.

“You are publicly my fiancée. If not my fiancée, then what other woman am I supposed to take to this ball?”

In this gathering, before going fully into the meeting, a type of entertainment was scheduled for the guests to enjoy. The scheduled entertainment was this ball.

I had chosen Lapis Lazuli as my partner for the ball. It was an obvious choice. However, it seemed that our Miss Lala was feeling very burdened by the ball.

“Walpurgis Night is a social party strictly reserved for Demon Lords. Only lords of the highest standings would

be allowed to attend. It is not a place where a mixed blood, like this one, should be present."

“Nevertheless, there are no rules that the companion has to be a Demon Lord as well. It is fine to bring anyone I please.”

“There may be no rule, but it is customary that…….”

"Aah, I can't hear you—. I can't hear you—."

Lapis Lazuli shut her mouth.

Even if you glared at me with those eyes of dissatisfaction, it couldn't be helped.

Dantalian was currently receiving the spotlight as the main character in a romance story. A man blinded by love. That was my image to the people. It was impossible to leave Lapis Lazuli and wander on my own at this point.

Furthermore, I had taken a liking to this concept. A fool who had indulged in his passion and had lost all of his rationality. Was this not appropriate? No one would be cautious around a fool like that.

Smart people would only scorn a dullard like me and do nothing more. Followed by coming to a misunderstanding that the true culprit was Lapis Lazuli. All suspicion would focus on Lapis Lazuli, while I was rejoicing my days of freedom…….

Am I, perhaps, a genius?

It was truly the perfect plan.

Thanks to the Black Death I had made an incredible amount of money, and now, the only thing I had left to do was to shut myself in my castle and live the rest of my life as a shut-in. The gate to Heaven was already right in front of me.

“.....Your highness is making the same face your highness makes when thinking of something perverted.”

Be quiet.

After 20 minutes had passed, the main gate became more vacant. It was then that we had departed from our carriage and entered the ballroom. We had waited until now because we did not want to deal with being harassed by other people.

The gatekeeper, noticing our approach, announced in a loud voice.

“Rank 71st, Demon Lord Dantalian, entering!”

All at once, the people in the inner-venue turned to look this way.

Not being bothered by their gazes, I made my way to a corner of the ballroom and took my place there. The sound of people whispering around us could be heard. I was not able to hear what they were saying exactly, but

I knew it was not a favorable mood. It was close to the feeling of them being aghast by the fact that I had arrived at the ball actually accompanied by an Untouchability as a partner.

I muttered.

“It feels like I’ve become a celebrity.”

“This one thinks that we do not have to go as far as to link arms.”

“Is it not fine since we adequately appear like fools?”

Referentially, we were affectionately standing arm in arm.

I smiled.

“Don’t loathe something like just linking arms. I am also planning to kiss your lips in a bit, after all.”

“Your highness Dantalian’s tongue will be cut off then.”

“I especially like the unfriendly way you respond.”

“Of course, your highness.”

“Oh, Lazuli. Do not live so selfishly. We are currently the couple throwing around the hottest scandal on the continent. The people are demanding a spectacle from us. Can you not touch lips with the meaning of being a service to the people? Demonstrate some sacrifice mentality for once.”

“In the continent which this one knows of, for the most selfish person to give this one such advice. It is incredibly shocking…….”

“I am curious so I must ask. Do you know that each and every time you speak coldly, your lips shine temptingly that much as well? If by chance, with that intention, you were trying to charm me then…….”

Step

Lapis Lazuli was stepping on my toes.

“What an adorable response. I’m starting to like you more.”

“What a coincidence. This one is starting to detest your highness more.”

“One day we will discover a common ground.”

“Please keep in mind that that common ground will never be on top of a bed.”

“What a deplorable front.”

I decided to back off for now. There really wasn’t anything more enjoyable in the world than teasing a competent woman.

Fairies, holding trays filled with alcoholic beverages, came fluttering towards us. I lightly picked up a glass of white wine. Lapis Lazuli and I, on good terms(I admit that I am using words that are debatable), enjoyed our

wine and waited for the ball to begin.

Other than the fairies, no one else had tried to approach us. People only examined us from afar out of the corner of their eyes. It felt like I had become a hippo in a zoo for sightseeing purposes.

Despite that, I was able to spend my time amusingly. It was quite interesting to be able to actually see how the Demon Lords looked like in real life, when originally, I had only seen them as illustrations in <Dungeon Attack>. Rank 9th Paimon, rank 8th Barbatos, rank 5th Marbas……. Was this the level of the highest Demon Lords? They were powerful enemies that had given Game Overs to my game protagonist multiple times.

“I would like to raise a greeting to all of the lords who were able to gather here for today’s Walpurgis Night. My name is Ivar Lodbrok and I am from the Keuncuska Firm. Excessively, I have been bestowed the honor to host today’s meeting.”

An incredibly old gentlemen walked to the center of the ballroom. Minor applause came from the Demon Lords. It felt as if only about 6 people had clapped their hands. The rest of the Demon Lords merely gazed at the old man apathetically.

On the other hand, I narrowed my brows.

“That’s Ivar Lodbrok?”

“Yes. That man is the wealthiest person in the demon world, the owner of Keuncuska Firm, and a true vampire, Ivar Lodbrok. The person that this one had betrayed thanks to your highness.”

“Hmm.”

A male, huh.

Ivar Lodbrok was a character that appeared in the game as well. Except, the Ivar Lodbrok that I knew of was a bit different from the one in front of me.

I waited to see what would happen in the ballroom with an interested gaze.

“Before anything else, I would like to explain the agenda for today’s meeting. First, the archduke of Naraka Tapanas has passed away last month. Because there are no official heirs, the next archduke must be selected a day sooner, if possible. I would like to gather the opinions of the Demon Lords present here and…….”

“Wait. Wait a second, old man.”

A girl’s sharp voice rang.

Everyone turned to look at the source of the voice.

There was no proper lighting in the ballroom, so it was dark. There were candles as large as people’s heads floating around. Those were the only sources of light.

The deep yellow candles were drifting slowly through the air, occasionally reflecting this person, and occasionally reflecting that person. However, it was only for a short moment of time. People were soon enveloped back into the darkness.

“Because of that damn plague, all of the teleportation management offices are down. We got here riding on brooms, which none of us are cut out for, for dozens of hours. Do you know what that means? This is indeed the **best** time to clamor about boring and antique politics.”

The candle light reflected the girl’s face.

The girl had hair as white as snow.

Her eyes may have been glowing a bright golden color, but it was certain that she was looking down on everyone here except herself. No matter how you looked at her, she appeared to be no more than 14 years old, but she too was a Demon Lord. A Demon Lord who had lived for over 500 years, at that—rank 8th, Barbatos.

For reference, I wasn’t sure if she was trying to achieve a match with her white hair, but her figure was as flat as the great plains of Siberia. She, for sure, looked like a child.

“Your highness Barbatos. We understand, but the topic is urgent…….”

“Sure. An epidemic is spreading across the continent, there are 7 successors in the Tapanas of Naraka that are causing a civil war, and due to the result of the civil war in the kingdom of Sardinia the nobles that were unable to win are starting to revolt. What else are we in but a shitty era? Regardless, the world has been similarly crap since one hundred years ago, two hundred years ago, and even five hundred years ago.”

Barbatos raised her glass with her right hand.

“Even if the conference were to be delayed by 3 hours, nothing will change, you old vampire. Drink alcohol without saying a word. Allow us to have a moment of rest.”

“Mm…….”

The old gentleman, Ivar Lodbrok, opened and closed his mouth as if he was troubled. True vampires may have been nobles amongst nobles, but they were still lower than a Demon Lord. It would be difficult to straight out ignore the suggestion of having a drinking party.

Unless it was a Demon Lord of the same rank.

“Still ignorant as ever, Barbatos.”

This time a mature lady's voice could be heard.

"You can drink alcohol whenever you please. You're always drowning yourself in alcohol throughout the entire year anyways, so why not try restraining yourself for this one night? If the word 'patience' even exists in your vocabulary, that is."

A candle light vaguely shined down onto the woman.

Completely opposite to Barbatos, the maiden had fiery red hair. Throughout the entire world, it felt like the only person that this woman held in contempt was Barbatos.

Lapis Lazuli whispered to me in a small voice.

"That is rank 9th, Paimon. She is well-known for her deep-rooted enmity with Barbatos."

"I can tell that very well without any explanation, because the distribution is entirely unfair. If I was Barbatos, then I too would probably resent Paimon."

"Distribution?"

I gestured towards Paimon with my chin. Lapis Lazuli, with a doubtful expression, followed my gaze and examined the female Demon Lord.

Her gaze fell exactly on top of Paimon's chest. Different from Barbatos, Paimon boasted voluptuous breasts. It was proof that, in the end, nature was not

fair.

Lapis Lazuli let out a sigh.

“.....Your highness. Please partake in the meeting seriously.”

“Whenever I see those two rising hills, I feel wonderment. It’s the same feeling as when you see a natural landscape and become entranced by it.”

“Please realize that your highness appears very, incredibly, tremendously vulgar right now.”

“Lala. I am a person who hates going outside more than death. I’m currently experiencing death in real-time. If I were to bore of teasing you, then how would I possibly resist the urge to kill myself?”

Lapis Lazuli went silent.

Instead, the pressure on my right foot increased.

Ignoring the pain transmitting from my toes, I grinned.

“This is the price for tormenting me on a day-to-day basis. Do suffer for me.”

“.....Did your highness truly hate being woken up in the morning that much?”

“Each individual person has their own biological clock. I am a person that physically should not wake up in the morning.”

“I guess sleeping an average of 16 hours every day is

your highness' biological clock. This one thinks that the problem is not physical, but your highness' mentality."

"In short, are you saying that my mentality is wrong and is on the same level of being rotten to the core like wastewater?"

"Today, in this location, this one has realized for the first time that your highness has an impressive summarizing ability."

"Lala. In a single day, I have to sleep at least 15 hours."

"No matter how much the ample amount, this one can allow no longer than 7 hours."

"What? 7 hours?"

My voice grew louder on its own.

"7 hours?! Are you kidding me? You might as well tell me to lie down and get back up immediately. People need at least 12 hours of sleep in order to function properly as a person!"

"This one sleeps no more than 4 hours a day. Ever since the time this one had roamed the back alleys and for 30 years since then."

"Ooh. So this is the moment where it's finally revealed as to why you had become such an inhumane and cold-hearted person. The reason why you were always

temperamental as if you were on your period all the time was also revealed.”

“Your highness. Most people only partake in around 7 hours of sleep.”

“And **most** people are wrong! Did you not listen to what Barbatos had said? Did she not testify that, be it the present or the past, the world has always been utter crap? That is all because of the lack of sleep. A perfectly logical conclusion.”

“That is a level of logic that would make even Aristoteles cry.”

Once again, Lapis Lazuli and I had failed at reaching a diplomatic common ground.

15 hours and 7 hours, the gap located between the two was too large. If this were to go on a war might break out. The tragedy would repeat.

It wasn't just us two that were having our diplomatic relations deteriorate. In the ballroom, Paimon and Barbatos were heated up and conducting a psychological warfare.

Barbatos made a cynical remark.

“Paimon. Our elegant whore lady! I heard the news that you had finally had intercourse with a centaur yesterday. Your hips should be incredibly stiff, but I see

you were able to crawl your way here quite well. Or perhaps, is it because your bottom mouth is already so loose that you can handle something like a centaur easily? Hm—?”

“People might think that you’re uneducated because your words are so crude. You should start learning how to have some decency, Barbatos. You’ve been fretful like a child for the past 500 years, so it’s about time you started to behave like an adult.”

Paimon raised the corners of her mouth. She then covered her mouth with a feathered fan a step late. She had shown her smirk on purpose before hiding it.

“With a body like that, you’ll probably never be intimate with a proper man. Since you haven’t been able to have a legitimate relationship even once in your life, there’s no choice but to forever be a little lady. Oh dear, I’m sorry. It’s wrong to make fun of someone because of their body…… This lady ended up being discourteous.”

“—It’s not that I **can’t** get a man, but that I’m purposely **not** going into a relationship, Miss whore. I’m voluntarily single. Of course, a girl who tosses her body around like a rag towel wouldn’t understand something like that.”



“Aha. That is not so. This lady does very much understand.”

Paimon narrowed her eyes.

Ridicule glossed over her red pupils.

“You can’t pick the grapes anyways, so it’s more reassuring for your mental health if you were to just ignore it saying that they were sour grapes. No matter when, is it not delightful when witnessing people rationalizing with themselves, Barbatos? You could say it feels like you’re getting a peek at their lacking personality and intelligence…….”

“…….”

Barbatos ground her teeth.

I was deeply swayed by the conversation between the two Demon Lords. That was why, I immediately conveyed the emotions I was feeling to Lapis Lazuli.

“Lala, I may have a deep hatred for the outside world, however, if I were to be accompanied by those two, then the idea of going outside doesn’t seem that bad. Just standing here like this and listening to them is putting me in a good mood.”

“This one thinks that is because your highness is corrupted on the inside.”

“Do you think it would be possible to request to go

on a date with the both of them at the same time? I'd go out with them, and then sneak to the back and simply watch the two of them fight."

"Minor Gods will be shocked, the people will be shocked, and even the old sages will be so shocked that they'll kick out of their graves because of your highness' atrocious personality."

Lapis Lazuli let out a sigh.

"For the past 300 years, Barbatos and Paimon has gone to war locally with one another 14 times. Among the Demon Lords they have the worst possible relationship. This one, on the loyalty to your highness, advise your highness to give up on that short-lived dream."

"They go to war every 21 years?"

War was not a kid's play. It consumed a vast amount of manpower, supplies, and time. If they truly didn't hate each other to the bone, then they wouldn't do something like go to war so frequently.

"What frighteningly fierce women. I am even more interested in them."

"This one has started to severely worry about your highness Dantalian's preference in women. This one can only hope that it is unnecessary concern....."

"Where is the third?"

Lapis Lazuli tilted her head.

“Pardon?”

“I’m talking about the third. The third character. The world is like a miniature universe, that is why it has the tendency to try to keep things balanced on its own. Look there. One person is a little lady who lives her life with curses hanging off her tongue, while on the other side is a woman pretending to be virtuous but lives her life saying whatever she wants. The balance of the universe is collapsed severely…….”

I shook my head.

“Meetings without a mediator could not possibly have been maintained for hundreds of years. There must be a dignified person who is capable of suppressing these two women, who were being unruly like water buffaloes in heat. That woman would most likely match my preference.”

And sure enough.

“The two of you. Calm down.”

An incredibly somber voice fell upon the ballroom.

“Due to your quarrel, the conference has stopped. How about showing a little bit of respect to Ivar Lodbrok who has stepped forward as our host.”

The Demon Lords who were arguing shut their

mouths.

A candle silently reflected the face of the new speaker.
Rank 5th, Marbas.

With an Eastern European style overcoat draped over their shoulder, they had a very robust physique and was looking over the audience slowly with a monocle…… it was a bald **man**.

It was so. The third character was nothing more than a man with a burly frame.

Lapis Lazuli muttered.

“This one really did have no reason to worry about your highness’ preference in women.”

“……I retract my previous statement.”

“Marbas is considerably popular with females. Although, this one did not know that it was the same with males as well.”

Once the highest ranking Demon Lord to be attending the meeting had stepped forward, the atmosphere of the ballroom became calmer. Ivar Lodbrok, receiving the help, continued on with the conference. While I moistened the inside of my mouth with wine, I listened to all kinds of topics.



Time passed long-windedly.

It would have been fun if another argument were to occur, but both Barbatos and Paimon kept their mouths shut. Thus, any type of entertainment was non-existent.

Outright boredom made my eyelids heavy. If it weren't for Lapis Lazuli constantly pinching my side, I would have most likely fallen asleep by now.

While I was desperately having a bloody battle against drowsiness, Paimon had finally opened her mouth.

"My dear comrades, and Ivar Lodbrok. Before we get into the discussion about the plague, there is an incident that we must certainly settle first."

"What may that be, your highness?"

"The murder incident. I believe that everyone here is aware of the disgraceful event that had occurred several days ago. Our kinsmen, Andromalius. Rank 72nd Demon Lord, Andromalius, was murdered."

Ara?

I blinked my eyes which were clouded by sleepiness.

Paimon was bringing up a rather serious subject.

"Andromalius. He was a shameful man. He behaved in ways unbecoming for a Demon Lord. However, despite all that, he was still the same Demon Lord as us."

With light steps, Paimon made her way to the center of the ballroom. Each step she took a bit of the drowsiness in my skull was pulled out. By the time she had come to a full stop, I was already fully awake.

“No matter how big the continent is, the amount of chosen ones to be born as a Demon Lord was 72. We were a race of only 72 people. Each individual’s value is so precious that we can not be compared to the other races. That kin of ours was murdered mercilessly.”

Paimon turned her head to glare at me.

The emotions held within those red eyes, they were unmistakably hostility.

“Everyone must know full well as to why this is such a grave incident. The culprit to murder our kin must be punished justly.”

At once, all of the Demons Lords turned to look this way.

“.....”

An alarm was going off in my head.

The sleepiness had evaporated and my consciousness quickly became cold. An unpredicted attack. A situation that I had not prepared for beforehand. Judging that I was facing danger, my mind operated more fiercely.

Why?

It felt like the space around me had slowed down.

‘Why is she attacking me when I was just standing still?’

The information that I had intentionally blocked off had started to flood in.

The Demon Lords’ clothing.

Facial expressions.

The shape of people’s mouths as they whispered to one another.

Each piece of information was ‘gathered’ and ‘analyzed’ and then piled up as data.

For instance—Paimon.

She had glared at me only once before immediately turning her gaze away. Even now, she was delivering an impassioned speech not to me, but the other Demon Lords. What did this mean?

‘She isn’t attacking me because she has an emotional grudge towards me.’

If so, then.

‘She is attacking me for some sort of political reason. That is why, before attacking me, convincing the other Demons Lords has priority.’

I had temporarily accepted that hypothesis.

Thus, the starting point for deductions was obtained. I was provided a single foundation. Like a massive tree sprouting on a small piece of land, various kinds of hypothesis and deductions reached out like branches from my head.

‘What political benefit would you gain from attacking me?’

‘Dantalian is a ricefish. There’s nothing to gain from stabbing him.’

‘Then it’s the Black Death.’

An immediate answer had come out.

‘By using Andromalius’ murder as an excuse, they’ll take away the large amount of black herbs that are in my possession. Paimon’s goal is around there.’

‘An accomplice?’

‘If she were to try and hold a monopoly on all of the black herbs by herself, then the other Demon Lords would most likely oppose. There is an accomplice here. Who is it?’

The first stage of my deduction was complete.

I took a slight glance around me.

The amount of Demon Lords here was 32. The amount of companions that had accompanied the Demon

Lords was also 32. If you included the host, Ivar Lodbrok, then there was a total of 65 people. All 65 individuals were looking back and forth between Paimon and myself.

‘There’s too much.’

I had to decrease the amount of possible suspects.

I changed my thoughts.

According to the manual engraved into my consciousness.

A more diverse number of cases.

A more natural conclusion.

Faster.

‘What if her main objective isn’t to attack me?’

In another person’s perspective, I didn’t predict the plague but I had prophesied it instead. They probably thought that it wasn’t possible when thinking with common sense.

Someone had spread the disease on purpose. It would be more natural to judge it as so. They would also think that since Demon Lord Dantalian had no talent, the true culprit was someone else.

Culprit.

A culprit who had the capability of making a disease and spreading it.

My line of sight slowly moved towards a certain Demon Lord. A girl with white hair was holding her glass and silently sipping red wine.

‘Barbatos.’

‘Only necromancers could control plagues.’

The greatest necromancer in history.

The Demon Lord to have uniquely obtain the archmage title in the field of black magic.

In a third-party perspective, there was no one as close to being the ‘true culprit’ as Barbatos.

‘Was that it.’

My heart cooled down.

‘So that’s why it’s Paimon.’

This time I turned my gaze to look at Paimon.

Paimon was grandly holding out her fan as if she was trying to announce something. Her movements were slow. Her skirt had stopped mid-flutter and was frozen in place. Her mouth moved slowly. The scenery over there wasn’t able to keep up with my thinking process.

Paimon.

Barbatos’ arch rival.

According to her, Barbatos was the real culprit to have spread the Black Death.

Dantalian was nothing more than a chess piece that

was moving in Barbatos' stead.

'I wonder.'

I clearly understood how unpleasant my current situation was.

Unbeknownst to me, it seems I had ended up being swept up in a political fight between these two high nobles.

This was why politicians were annoying. They'd make a fuss on their own and involved completely unrelated people. If they weren't causing great harm, then I didn't know what they were doing.

The problem was that Barbatos and Paimon had such a bad relationship that they'd go to war locally once every 21 years. Their diplomatic relationship was brutal itself. To the point that the wordplay Lapis Lazuli and I would do couldn't possibly compare to what they'd do.

Whenever these two Demon Lord's diplomatic relations worsened, a war would break out. Despite that, Paimon was meddling with 'Dantalian who was Barbatos' pawn'. She was accusing me while being resolute of the worst outcome.

The scale of the plan was too large to be attempting while relying on some simple belief. War wasn't something you'd do thoughtlessly. Manpower was

consumed, supplies were wasted, and even your mental state would be worn out.

The decisive reason as to why Paimon was taking action.

A reason why she would peg me as the criminal while knowing full well that the worst outcome could be war.

In other words, undeniable evidence.

‘Paimon has evidence.’

Proof that the Black Death didn’t happen by chance.

‘But what kind of proof could it be that she would…… aha.’

I let out an exclamation in my head.

I see.

Why didn’t I consider this sooner?

Looking past Barbatos and Paimon, I gave a side glance to the girl standing directly besides me.

Lapis Lazuli.

If you thought about it then it was simple.

June 27th, Lapis Lazuli was in the very location where the first outbreak of the Black Death had happened, and had witnessed it in person on the very day the plague had started to brew. She was standing at the starting point.

Lapis Lazuli had only gone to the site because of my

advice. However, to a third-party it would seem completely different.

The succubus who had by chance bought the black herb, and by chance was the first person to witness the outbreak, and finally, by chance the black death turned out to be curable by the black herb.

It would have appeared as so to a third-party.

It wasn't possible, they would say.

And Paimon would have judged that 'it wasn't possible'.

If anything, the next scenario was more plausible. Barbatos had created the Black Death and Lapis Lazuli had used some kind of method to spread it in the city. Afterwards, Lapis Lazuli had escaped to Barbatos' pawn, Dantalian…….

The true culprit was Barbatos.

The pawn was Dantalian.

The person to execute the plan was Lapis Lazuli.

This kind of structure was established.

I would like to turn that down as nonsensical drivel, but on the contrary, Paimon would consider my claim as nonsensical drivel.

If Paimon were to ask, ‘How could you predict the outbreak of the Black Death beforehand, and why was Lapis Lazuli there?’. I could only respond with, ‘I knew about it because of the game.’ And even if I were to lie and say ‘Because I had a precognitive dream.’, I could not say anything back if they were to deem it as nonsense. Paimon would only judge it while purely thinking rationally…….

‘Although, she ended up attacking me because of that rationality.’

Okay then.

Paimon’s actions were all explained.

If that was so, then there was only one more question left.

Who had told Paimon about Lapis Lazuli’s whereabouts?

The entire time Lapis Lazuli was at the location she had been disguised.

Only a very small amount of people knew the fact that Lapis Lazuli was at the starting city of the Black Death, Syracuse, between June 20th and July 16th. Speaking frankly, there were only two people.

One person.

‘Myself who had ordered Lapis Lazuli to go there.’

Of course, I did not tell Paimon anything.

The other remaining person.

‘The person who had no choice but to know where Lapis Lazuli was working.’

In other words, her superior.

The person to receive her reports.

Lapis Lazuli’s old boss.

Ivar Lodbrok—.

Turning my head, I looked at the old vampire. The old gentleman with a nicely grown beard was standing vacantly. As if he had no involvement with this situation whatsoever, like a praying mantis that was hiding within tall grass and lying in wait to ambush, this vampire’s camouflage was quite remarkable.

‘Yes.’

You have been controlling everything in the background.

‘It was you.’

The accomplice was revealed.

The second stage of my speculation was complete.

‘I will admit it.’

Ivar Lodbrok was a fairly decent predator.

Like a lioness, he had tried to hunt me carefully. From beginning to end he had planned and created a net around me. Greenhorns like Demon Lord Andromalius or adventurer Riff were different from birth.

He was perhaps the strongest opponent I had faced since falling into this world.

However, there was a chance that all of my assumptions were wrong.

Before going full-scale into the hunt of Ivar Lodbrok, there was a truth that I had to verify first.

I muttered in a low voice.

“Lapis Lazuli.”

As soon as I had moved my tongue.

The time that had slowed down temporarily had returned back to its normal pace. Paimon’s movements, the whispering of other people, and even the air that I could feel on my nose, everything had regained their speed.

“……That is why, this lady requests for the immediate punishment of Dantalian. This murder is inexcusable!”

Paimon pointed at me with her fan and spoke passionately.

“It would only be appropriate for him to pay a fine of 1,000,000 Libra as compensation for the murder of

Andromalius, and Dantalian himself to be confined in the Frozen Prison for 15 years!”

I wonder if they had thought it was an excessively severe punishment. People here and there in the ballroom had begun to stir. Half the people were watching as if they were observing something interesting, and the other half were nodding seriously as if they were enjoying this situation.

In this circumstance, Lapis Lazuli responded quietly.

“Yes, your highness?”

“I want you to follow my next orders without objecting whatsoever. Take five steps away from me, and then, as if something urgent had come up, make your way to the entrance of the ballroom quickly.”

“……Should this one walk completely outside?”

Lapis Lazuli’s voice was somewhat stiff. Well, in this situation where we were being accused by the rank 9th Demon Lord, it was inevitable.

In consideration to her, I whispered as softly as I could.

“No. There is no need for that. From now on the greatest circus performance in the world is about to happen, so you should be here to watch it till the very end. Do make sure to observe from the VIP seats.”

“The VIP seats……?”

Lapis Lazuli was slightly bewildered by my carefree attitude.

While I was whispering with her, I was carefully examining every corner of the ballroom. 65 important characters were gathered in this hall. Even if I were to be in possession of the most brilliant brain, if I was to keep an eye on all 65 people here then I had to be a bit earnest.

“I will count down from 5.”

I commanded her in a subdued tone.

“Move the instant the number ‘one’ comes out of my mouth. Five. Four. Three. Two…….”

One.

Lapis Lazuli moved her feet.

Following my orders, she took five steps back. Then, slowly raising her pace, she made her way towards the entrance of the ballroom.

‘If there is an accomplice other than Ivar Lodbrok.’

I concentrated my cognition to every individual that was present in this ballroom.

‘They will pay attention to not the puppet, Dantalian, but the true person to execute the plan, Lapis Lazuli.’

65 people.

Among these people, the person to watch Lapis Lazuli till the very end was the ‘enemy’.

Once Lapis Lazuli went further away, 21 out of 65 people had turned to look at her out of instinct. But it was only for a short moment. People soon lost interest in the movements of this small succubus, and turned their gaze back to either Paimon or myself. To them, they had no reason to pay attention to Lapis Lazuli.

‘Come out.’

I smiled.

I wonder if it was because my brain had worked fiercely a second ago, as a sign of the heat, a single drop of sweat had formed on my forehead.

‘Show yourselves, my prey.’

Once 3 seconds had passed the 21 suspects decreased to 15.

After the fifth second, the 15 suspects drastically decreased to 4.

Finally after 11 seconds had passed..... a single person.
Only Ivar Lodbrok.

The vampire disguised as an aged gentleman, while wrinkling his forehead, watched Lapis Lazuli till the very end.

‘Aha.’

I twisted the edges of my mouth.

‘So you’re telling me that there are no other accomplices aside from Paimon?’

Thus, the third stage of my deduction was complete.

Found the culprit’s motive — found the culprit’s accomplice — and finally confirmed the authenticity of my speculations — all three steps had been completely fulfilled.

‘Isn’t two people not enough, Ivar Lodbrok?’

In truth, it was incredibly lacking.

Oh, clever vampire.

Not only Paimon, you were supposed to also bring Barbatos and Marbas to your side. You said you were the richest person in the demon world. Wouldn’t it have been possible to bribe Barbatos and Marbas if you had used all of your fortune?

But to bring only one Demon Lord.

Oh, at most for it to be only Paimon!

In order to tear apart the single most scorned Untouchability in the world, I had spent my entire fortune and received a loan of 10,000 gold. I had put my entire future on the line. **This was what it meant to be a lion putting their all into hunting a rabbit!**

If someone were to come at you with the intent to

kill, then you do not hesitate to use all that you have.

Being met with such discourtesy, the deepest part of my soul lamented.

The world truly was overflowing with people ignorant of etiquette. As a person who did their best to live life as courteously as possible, the tragedy of this world always enveloped a miserable feeling around me.

How could people be so shameless?

Why couldn't people be a bit more lazy when it came to hunting others?

Why were people, who had endured their laziness in order to hunt another, behave so reluctantly in regards to spending a couple of more coins, when they should have been putting their all into the hunt?

My second half little sister had evaluated that I had the most fiendish brain out of every human in the world, but that was wrong. I just didn't understand why people lived their lives being 'casually sincere'. I was thickheaded in this area.....

There was nothing I could do about it.

I will personally teach you what proper etiquette is.

I will make you regret not risking your own life when you yourself had decided on your own to disrupt another person's comfortable life.

“This lady would like to suggest a formal hearing! I, Paimon, as the rank 9th Demon Lord, and also as the lord in charge of justice, would like to incriminate rank 71st, Demon Lord Dantalian.”

Yes.

For starters, Paimon.

You were the first problem.

You, by thinking rationally, had judged that I was Barbatos’ pawn. That I had aided and abetted the spreading of the disease and did nothing while millions of innocent lives were dying.

In <Dungeon Attack>, Paimon, unbecoming of a Demon Lord, was friendly towards humans. She had the hobby of dressing herself up as a human and hunting for men. Even in the game, the main character would end up meeting Paimon, who was disguised as a human, by chance while roaming the city.

Paimon falls for the hero at first sight. And, until the hero came across, she had insistently made passes at him. Even when she ended up being impaled by the hero’s sword in the end,

— This is an already dying body.

— Could you not bestow upon this lady a final kiss?

She confesses her love to the hero like so.

The hero, unable to deny her dying wish, kisses Paimon. Although numerous female heroines aimed for the first kiss of the hero's, the person to steal his first kiss was Paimon, a Demon Lord who was the enemy of mankind. It was a rather weird love story.

Because of the recently spread Black Death, numerous amounts of humans were continuing to die off. In the position of Paimon, who considered humans to be intellectual beings of equal rights, the Black Death was an unforgivable calamity.

‘I can not forgive Barbatos for this tragedy.’

‘I will also punish Dantalian who is behaving as your pawn.’

Up to here, it was fine.

From a common-sense point of view, this was correct.

It was an everyday occurrence for people to mistake another for a criminal as they lived their lives. However, when thinking rationally, were a misunderstanding to occur, should you not attempt to converse with the person first?

Why would you attack right off the bat?

Are you on your period? Were you too, perhaps, also under the influence of the forever-on-your-period syndrome, and was being swept away by your

uncontrollable emotional turbulence? That's a big problem. I recommend that you go to a doctor and get your symptoms prescribed and immediately treated.

But before that, I'll fix that head of yours.

Be a good child and learn what true etiquette is.



Amidst the uproarious atmosphere in the ballroom,

“.....The one with the highest rank amongst us, is myself. It would only be appropriate for a Demon Lord to be the judge of a conflict between two Demon Lords.”

I wonder if he had thought that he couldn't remain as a spectator anymore, but rank 5th Demon Lord Marbas had stepped forward.

“Ivar Lodbrok. I shall be temporarily taking the role as the host. I'm sorry, but the weight of this hearing is too much for me to leave in your hands.”

“As you desire, your highness.”

The old vampire obediently backed off.

“Hm.”

Marbas stood in the center of the hall.

The way his legs were standing firmly made it feel like

he was a gigantic tree. His stability was remarkable. This bald man with a burly stature was knitting his brows a fair amount, as if he didn't really find this situation to be pleasing at all.

"I am rank 5th. As the Demon Lord in charge of nobleness, I shall formally receive Paimon's request. The accused is rank 71st. No name, Demon Lord Dantalian.

Marbas' announcement weighed heavily on the surrounding.

His dignified voice would not allow any objections. The Demon Lords lowered their gazes, and the faeries floated into a line and carefully bowed.

"Excluding the people directly involved, intervention from a third-party is strictly prohibited. Dantalian. The one accused on this Walpurgis Night. Come forth and face your accuser."

It would only be appropriate to obey the host.

Taking a couple of steps forward, I stood at the exact center of the ballroom.

"....."

"....."

Paimon and myself, we stared at each other while leaving a slight gap between us.

Like how duels would start between gladiators in the

Rome Colosseum.

“Once both sides has finished their refutation, we shall decide on whose opinion is right by majority vote. First, I shall present the right to question Dantalian to the accuser, Paimon.”

“Yes.”

Paimon grabbed both ends of her skirt and bowed.

It felt like time had stood still on the folds of her politely raised skirt.

“Thank you for accepting this hearing.”

Paimon slowly glared this way.

“Shall we confirm all of the facts first then?

Dantalian.”

“As you wish, your highness.”

I bobbed my head in greeting.

In truth, it was the first time we were facing each other, and yet there were reserved no actions between us. Hostility was more explicit than goodwill.

“You, on the 8th month and 16th day, at the daybreak of 4 o’clock, murdered Demon Lord Andromalius in the Hermes’ Plaza of Niflheim. Is this lady correct?”

“That is correct. I admit this.”

“And, Dantalian. You, knowing full well that the other party was a Demon Lord, murdered him anyways. Is this

lady wrong?”

“That is also correct. Ah, but if I were to respond more accurately.”

I raised my shoulders.

“I did not know he was a Demon Lord from the very beginning. While I was drinking beer in the plaza, some young greenhorn was beating up the elderly. I had wondered what kind of bastard it was. And it turned out it was a Demon Lord. I was a bit surprised.”

“.....In other words, you did not murder the Demon Lord on accident, but you had murdered him with the intention to do so.”

I shook my head.

“I apologize, your highness Paimon. But there is a slight misunderstanding.”

“A misunderstanding?”

Paimon creased her brows.

“What kind of misunderstanding could be in this clear truth?”

“I’m referring to Andromalius. Swearing to the Goddesses, your highness Paimon, I would have killed that mongrel regardless of the fact of him being a Demon Lord or not.”

People started to stir.

Paimon frowned and warned me.

“.....Dantalian. Today is the Walpurgis Night, and you are currently being accused of murder. How about making your way of speech a bit more polite?”

“Ooh. Excuse me, but I can not do so. Your highness, with a delighted mind, I will continue to call Andromalius a mongrel. Believe me. It was only appropriate for that **bastard** to die.”

“You.....”

“Honestly, it’s a bit regrettable. I should have gifted that fool with a more painful death. I had simply ended it by stabbing him in the throat with a dagger once. He really was garbage, roaming through the alleyways like a bum. It’s obvious as to how weak he was.”

The stirring grew much louder.

I was purposely exaggerating my words and making them more offensive.

Marbas had said that we would decide who was right by majority vote. As much as Paimon was the rank 9th Demon Lord, she had that many followers as well. So if a normal battle of votes were to happen just like this? As the person who doesn’t even have a single follower, my fate was certain defeat.

Thus, I had to make an ally.

The Demon Lord who hated Paimon.

The Demon Lord who preferred crude words over gentle words.

And most importantly, the high-class Demon Lord to have as much followers as Paimon.

‘Barbatos.’

That was so.

I was not responding to Paimon, but I was appealing to Barbatos instead. Now, watch me carefully. There’s a rookie here that should certainly suit your preference.

You want to get a shot in on Paimon, right? You should still have some piled up rage from losing in that argument earlier. I shall fulfill that desire in your stead. Barbatos. All you have to do is pick me during the majority vote. Albeit temporary, it will be an amazing alliance…….

“Measure your words, Dantalian!”

Paimon shouted.

“Andromalius was our kin!”

“I can only agree with half of your highness’ opinion. Andromalius was not simply one of our kin. He was a **disgraceful** member of our kin. Ah, everyone! Please! Let us be more honest.”

I quickly turned to look around.

“Just because that mongrel did not want to pay for his alcohol, he had assaulted the bar owner. The owner was an old dwarf who was so aged that his back was crooked. But, that’s not all. I had done some research later on and found out that the amount of citizens he had killed in Niflheim alone was 54 people!”

“That is…….”

“There are even 12 kids included in that list. Did you all know this? That guy had whipped these kids to death simply because they did not lower their heads to him. But if you were to add up not only the casualties but the injured as well, then the total would be 327 victims. Do keep in mind, this is only the number of publicly known victims. Everyone. If someone were to tell me that that mongrel had raped a young girl and threw her corpse away in the sewers, I wouldn’t be surprised! Oh, Goddesses! Please order the devils of Hell to punish Andromalius for all of eternity!”

“You, really…….”

Paimon opened her mouth.

“On what nerve, before this lady…… Dantalian. This lady can accuse you again for contempt of court. Fix your tone immediately.”

The corners of my mouth contorted.

Let's take a step back for now.

“.....My apologies, your highness Paimon. I would also like to apologize to all of the lords here today as well. I do not have the intentions to disgrace everyone here.”

I placed my palm on my forehead as if I was tremendously regretting the harsh statement I had just made.

Rampancy and honesty were two different things. Rampancy was the act of pushing yourself onto others and being a nuisance. On the other hand, honesty was the act of cooking yourself to look appealing and then serving yourself to others. As if you were telling them to ‘savor me’.

People liked honest and modest individuals. If I were to be well-behaved every once in a while, then the other party wouldn't consider me as that much of an annoyance. With sad puppy dog eyes, I once again gazed around at the audience.

“Everyone. As you can see, I am nothing more than a fool who is unable to keep even a single thing precious to me by my side. Rank 71st. I am a no-named ricefish that has no commendable record or title..... That is my true essence.”

“.....”

“However, despite being like that, I did not beat up an elderly man to avoid paying my bill. I did not assault 327 innocent civilians, and I did not kill 54 people among them.”

I lowered my voice by a notch.

Before I knew it, the ballroom had become silent.

“.....That was on the 8th month and 16th day. To be precise, four days ago. I had heard the sound of an old man crying out in the distance. And at that moment, I made eye contact with Andromalius. Your highness Paimon. Do you, perhaps, know what that guy had said the moment he looked at me?”

“.....To lower your gaze, is what I heard from a witness.”

“To be more accurate, it was, ‘What are you supposed to be? You aren’t going to lower your eyes?’.”

Several people around me clicked their tongues.

I made a bitter smile.

“What happened next was even more of a sight. Andromalius came over to where I was and assaulted my escorts. I had respectfully warned him to stop. And yet, Andromalius did not listen. He had then proceeded to hit my lover, who was also my vassal, and knocked her to the ground.”

I then pleaded.

“Your highness Paimon. What was I supposed to do in such a situation? Should I have dismissed my escorts and allowed myself to be under harms way? Or would it have been better to stay still and keep watch over my lover, while she was being struck and covered in dirt?”

“.....”

Paimon did not answer.

The sensible and cultured Paimon could not behave boldly here. It was because she was caught in her own sense of justice that her mouth had stopped. She had checkmated herself.

Now.

The service time of showing humility and acting cute was over.

I slowly started to raise my voice.

“I will say it once again, everyone. Andromalius. He was a mongrel that did not deserve the right to even be referred to as a Demon Lord. Is it not the innocent civilians that were sacrificed that deserved to be consoled? Are they not the true victims that deserved to be compensated?”

Triggering sympathy.

“Because of parasites like Andromalius, the impression

of all the Demon Lords became worse. Andromalius was not something like our kin! If it was truly for our race then, everyone! We were not supposed to follow the format of sacrificing 71 people for 1 man. We were supposed to follow the format of getting rid of 1 man for 71 people!”

Make him into the public enemy.

“Thus, I would like to ask. Your highness Paimon. Do you still consider Andromalius as our kin? Are you going to protect that larva-like Andromalius till the very end, while throwing away the rest of your race?”

A leading threat.

By making use of all kinds of rhetorical techniques.

I stared straight at Paimon.

“Your highness. Please answer.”

“This lady…….”

Paimon shut her lips tightly.

A terrified stillness fell over the ballroom.

It was then.

Clap

An applause could be heard from somewhere.

Barbatos was clapping her hands. People were looking at Barbatos with a blank expression. Seeing that, Barbatos tilted her head and smiled.

“What? His words are right.”

“ ”
.

"I, too, honestly wanted to kill Andromalius since awhile back. But that worm-like brat did rather well staying out of my sight. Good job, rookie. Thanks for going through the trouble to exterminate that parasite in our stead."

Barbatos continued to clap her hands.

And, following suit, one or two people at a time started to join in and applauded as well. Until eventually, the majority of the Demon Lord were giving an ovation. The amount of Demon Lords who did not clap and simply glared at me until the very end was 10 people. They were most likely Paimon's followers.

【Your devilish performance has captivated the people!】

【Demon Lord Marbas' affection went up by 1.】

【Demon Lord Barbatos' affection went up by 2.】

【Demon Lord Zepar's affection went up by 2.】

I'm sorry to say this, but you guys were just downgraded to the minority.

The judgement for hearings was purely done based on

majority logic, and unfortunately, an institutional strategy that showed consideration to the minority did not exist. That was the limit to a primitive political system. If you think that it's unfair then go develop democracy. Also, go start the French Revolution while you're at it. Although it also felt like there was a high chance that a guillotine would cut off a Demon Lord's head, oh well. There was a rule that progression was followed by the sacrifice of the minority. You could only accept your destiny.

"Be silent. I said that third-party intervention was prohibited."

Marbas warned everyone sternly to be quiet.

"Especially you, Barbatos. That clapping just now was an act done to interfere with the hearing on purpose. Do not do it again."

"Sorry about that, geezer. I was just purely moved. It's been a long time since a useful guy came crawling out from the lowest ranking Demon Lords, they're usually all trash. I didn't have any intentions on insulting the prestige of the hearing."

"I do not care about your intentions. I only care about the outcome of actions. Barbatos. As long as we aren't in a relationship, do you not think that it would only be

a waste of time to be considering the intentions of others?”

“Hm? Did you just indirectly confess to me, you geezer?”

“If you shut your mouth this instant, then I feel like love might spring forth.”

“What is this? I can’t miss out on my chance of getting a boyfriend for the first time in 500 years.”

Barbatos jokingly shrugged her shoulders.

I was able to get a basic grasp on what kind of relationship these two had. Barbatos was an incurable mischievous little sister, and Marbas was the older brother who had to deal with the constant stress of solving each and every immature antic of his little sister. The one to receive the most loss in this brother and sister relationship was the wholesome older brother. I knew it was so since I had experience dealing with 6 little sisters. You have my condolences, Marbas.

Marbas, as if he was shuddering, shook his head left to right.

“I shall end this hearing around here. As I told you all before, we shall decide with a majority vote on whose opinion is right. Now, with a show of hands…….”

“Wait a moment.”

At that moment, Paimon spoke in a hurry.

Marbas raised a brow.

“What is it? Is there something more you’d like to say?”

“Yes, there are still some questions that this lady has yet to inquire Dantalian.”

“Paimon…….”

Marbas took off his monocle and wiped it with a handkerchief.

Marbas’ voice became softer, as if he were talking to an old comrade.

“You and I have spent the past 500 years knowing one another. 500 years is quite the long period of time, don’t you think?”

“……Indeed, it was a rather difficult period of time. Marbas.”

“As you would know about me, I as well, know about you. I will honestly confess as to why I did not hide my bitter mood throughout this entire hearing. Paimon. I know full well that there was no chance that you would sincerely want to protect Andromalius. If anything, it would be the complete opposite. It would only be appropriate for you to despise a man like Andromalius.”

Paimon became silent.

Marbas, after completely cleaning his monocle, put it on again. The golden frame of his monocle silently reflected the light of a candle.

“Tonight is the Walpurgis Night, Paimon. It’s the Walpurgis Night. At a time, this was a gathering that all Demon Lords were obligated to attend, but now it has lost its past virtue and we are barely able to have the majority of the members here. Baal, Agares, Vassago, and Gamigin…… In the now, where the entire continent is struggling with an unprecedented plague, where are the Demon Lords who were of a higher rank than myself, and what are they doing?”

Paimon lowered her head.

“Marbas. More than anyone else, you are the one to be the most committed to the demon-kind. This lady sincerely expresses her respect to you.”

“We respect one another. Therefore, the Demon Lords that did not attend this meeting—the ones that are located throughout the demon world, while being indifferent and only concerned for their own personal pleasures, let us avoid the situation where we are laughed upon by these Demon Lords.”

Marbas spoke.

“Just for the claim alone that someone had tried to

protect Andromalius during the Walpurgis Night is more than enough reason for people to ridicule us. Oh dear, I can already hear the mocking laugh coming from Agares. I shall ask of you frankly. Please do not worsen this predicament any further.”

Paimon bit her lips.

“……Let this lady have one more chance.”

She had placed her right hand on her chest and bowed deeply.

“Please, allow me to have this final chance.”

Marbas stroke his beard.

The Demon Lord who belonged to the 9th rank among Demon Lords had gone as far as to lower her head even after hearing Marbas’ speech. It would probably be difficult for Marbas to enforce his thoughts any further in this state. It was a problem of keeping face and maintaining formality. Eventually, Marbas gave a single nod.

“Hm.”

Except, you will not say anything else besides that. Do what you want, but do not expect my help afterwards. It contained that kind of meaning.

Paimon returned the nod and looked straight at me.

“Dantalian.”

The first round was over.

She had the look as if she was telling me that the genuine second round was about to begin.

I spoke calmly.

“Your highness Paimon. There is something that I wish to tell you beforehand.”

“Speak.”

“I have no emotion towards your highness Paimon whatsoever.”

Paimon narrowed her brows.

“What does that mean?”

“Even if your highness found fault in the incident with Andromalius, I understand your highness. In the end, I will bear no ill will.”

Despite everything, she was still a sensible and cultured individual.

Additionally, she had equipped a splendid pair of breasts on her chest. I worshipped the universe, revered the laws of nature, and praised beautiful breasts. Paimon, it was not too late to back out now.

I made a smooth smile.

“We could do a toast right this instant and reconcile.”

Step down from here.

If you didn’t want to be torn apart by fangs and bleed

out, this was your final chance.

However.

“This lady has requested for a hearing in order to distinguish what is right or wrong. I did not come here to drink wine with you.”

In response to my advice, Paimon had shown a clearly displeased face. As if she was bothered by the fact that someone who was merely rank 71st would even bring up such a thing.

I nodded several times to display that I had understood.

Occasionally, I'd have the suspicion that I was speaking in an alien language. Thus meaning, that I had a language system that was completely different from everyone else. I didn't know why, but we would be able to understand each other, but that was merely luck on an astronomical chance, and in truth we were speaking in two completely different languages. For example, when I told them a line with the meaning of 'if you don't want to see blood then back away now', in their language they would hear it as 'please punch me in the face'.

I thought this was a rather strong hypothesis.

In my entire life I had given warnings like this

schemers to not go anywhere personally, but to make use of a subordinate. That was why I had hired a charming and competent succubus recently. It was obvious, I was the greatest schemer after all.

“This lady believes that she doesn’t have to inform everyone of the recent calamity that is sweeping through the continent. The Black Death, this terrifying curse is taking the lives of both humans and demons indiscriminately…….”

In addition, it was also filling my vault abundantly.

Hello, people of the continent. I’d like to give some words of comfort to the people who are struggling with the Black Death. Do not worry. With the simple payment of merely 10 gold coins, you could obtain the cure to the disease, the black herb. Save your life with money.

I did not think that this was an evil thing to do. If this went according to the original history in <Dungeon Attack>, the discovery of the cure was supposed to happen on 1507 on the Continental calendar, which was 2 years from now. People would die off helplessly for those two years.

Right now, people already knew about the effects of the black herb, thanks to my efforts. Except, since I had

a monopoly over it, the only people capable of buying it were the minority of people; nobles, the rich, and bourgeois families. I planned to maintain this current market price for at least a year.

The majority of the poor commoners that were unable to obtain the money to buy the cure would die off. In this globally severe calamity, only the nobles and the wealthy will survive.

Of course, people would scorn me.

Like how Paimon was despising me right now.

It was fine to curse at me and call me a money-grubbing demon.

My plan was more profound than they could possibly imagine.

Despite how I was, I still planned to keep my **civil duties** as a person. Out of everyone in the world, it was a duty that only I could perform.

“……Thankful to small mercies, there is a cure to the disease. Everyone. Do you all, perhaps, know who was the first person to discover that the black herb could treat the disease? It was Dantalian here. That was what the executive from the Keuncuska Firm had told this lady.”

People started to make a commotion.

Paimon spurred her voice.

“That’s not all. Dantalian had bought 30,000 black herbs before the plague had even occurred. This lady is unable to understand this part.”

“.....”

“Dantalian. You not only knew when the Black Death was going to spread, but you had also gone further than that and knew what the cure to that disease was. The cure to a disease that had spread for the first time in history.”

Paimon raised her feather fan and pointed it towards me.

“How could one explain this? The answer is simple. Dantalian, you are the very culprit who had spread the Black Death!”



Paimon's sharp thundering voice shook the ceiling.

People made a bigger commotion. The ballroom, in a bad meaning, started to get noisy. Was what Paimon had said the truth? Did someone create the Black Death artificially……? It felt like people were looking this way as if they were reprimanding me.

“Paimon. Slandering is not allowed in this hearing.”

Marbas spoke in a stern voice.

“The accusation that Dantalian is the culprit to have spread the plague. Are you making that claim while in possession of undeniable proof?”

“Dantalian, similar to this lady, had an exclusive consultant from the Keuncuska Firm. The procedure of buying the herbs was done through that consultant. The details on how Dantalian bought the cure, everything can most certainly be confirmed here!”

The clamour in the ballroom became more intense because of Paimon's definite answer.

Marbas made a wry face and turned his gaze, and on that spot was the representative of the Keuncuska Firm. The vampire Ivar Lodbrok stood with a cane in his hand.

“Vampire. Is Paimon's alleged statement the truth?”

“Ooh, honorable Marbas.”

The old vampire bowed his head.

“This one, because of a fearful mind, can not help but hesitate to judge whether something is the truth or not. However, if your highness so orders for it, this one can bring the evidence needed for this discussion whenever it is desired.”

“Are you saying that you can present the evidence right this instant?”

“Please give this one the order, and this one shall present it promptly.”

The rumbling from the people grew even louder.

‘Was all that true then?’, was the suspicion that had started to spread.

The people here were probably thinking along these lines. Paimon and Ivar were both individuals with an immense amount of authority. Surely, these two wouldn’t stubbornly insist that the plague was spread artificially for no reason. They had some type of evidence……. And thus, the people turned to glare at me as a result. Their gaze were filled with doubt.

It was at that moment, laughter could be heard.

At first, I couldn’t tell who was laughing. It was peculiar. I was still splitting up my concentration to focus on all 65 members in this ballroom. I couldn’t see

even a single person who was laughing, and yet the laughing grew louder, and for some reason the eyes that were looking at me were becoming wider.

It was then that I had realized that the laughter was coming out from my own mouth. I could guarantee it, but this was not an act. I could not stop laughing.

I spoke with a voice still filled with laughter.

“At most, I had endured my laziness and did my best. I could have not cared for something like a plague and have left it alone. That’s why I’m tired. It is determined that the reward for good will is always spite. Seriously, be it that world or this world, the worldly ways are always the same…….”

“……What are you talking about, Dantalian?”

“I apologize, your highness Paimon. And to also my dear kinsmen, I had witnessed a part of the universe, so I was deeply moved for a moment. No matter where, people do not change. My decision to shut myself in a cave was quite the correct choice.”

Plato was wrong.

People were capable of digging further into a cave.

It meant that it wasn’t a one-way street to avoid people.

Putting a smile on my lips, I turned to Marbas.

“Oh, honorable Marbas. I, of course, would like to declare my innocence. That is why, could you not allow me to have a short private conversation with the chief of the Keuncuska Firm for a moment?”

“A private conversation?”

“There is no need to be concerned. I may have said a private conversation, but it will be nothing more than exchanging a couple of lines. Why the chief executive of the Keuncuska Firm would be suspecting me, I have a general assumption as to what it might be. I simply want to see if I could solve this misunderstanding. It will not take that much time.”

Marbas nodded.

“If it is just that, then there is no problem. I will allow it.”

“I thank you sincerely.”

I gestured for Ivar Lodbrok to approach me.

Ivar Lodbrok, with his head lowered, made hurried steps towards my direction. The vampire with a remarkable acting ability and splendid disguise immediately apologized as soon as he was near.

“My apologies, your highness. It is our firm’s rule to clearly make certain types of information public, if one of our clients were to request it. No matter what

conclusion comes from this Walpurgis Night, this one swears that the Keuncuska Firm will assist your highness Dantalian till the very end.”

“Those are indeed reassuring words.”

I chuckled.

On the other hand, Ivar Lodbrok’s expression was incredibly stern. Laugh a little. A Demon Lord like myself was laughing. If you shared your enjoyment then it would double. It would be polite to go along with this side’s antics.

Well, from the beginning, was it already a vampire that had lost all concept of what manners were? That was fine. I don’t particularly dislike teaching others. I shall patiently and earnestly tutor you personally.

“It is a shame that our first meeting is in this kind of situation.”

“This one thinks the same, your highness. If it means to regain your highness’ honor, then this one, Ivar Lodbrok, shall drag this old body and do whatever it takes to aid your highness.”

“Old body. Hm, old body, is it?”

I grinned.

“I’m sorry, chief. But I do not consider you to be old.”

“Pardon?”

“You still appear like you’re full of youth to me.”

“That……this one appreciates your highness’ kind words.”

Ivar Lodbrok made a confused expression. As if wondering why I was suddenly complimenting them in this sort of situation. It seemed our true vampire here was a bit slow-witted. To the very least, it was a type of student that tutors did not like to teach. A type of student who took 1 hour just to understand one math equation. If it were me I’d receive no less than 100,000 won an hour to teach this kind of student. But for this occasion, I think I’ll make it free of charge.

“No, no. I mean that I am truly jealous of your youth.”

“……?”

Does he still not understand?

I was a teacher with a lot of patience. If I were to calmly explain each and every part, then I was certain that I would be able to make even a failed student obtain a great moral discovery and become proficient in a single subject. I did not easily throw away my hopes for people.

Thus, I leaned down.

I moved my mouth near Ivar Lodbrok’s ear.

Filling each and every one of my words with the goodwill from my heart——

I whispered softly.

“I’m curious as to how well your **true body** is doing.”

“.....”

Silence.

Mute shock.

It was vividly transmitted that the other person had fallen into a speechless distress.

I very much enjoyed this sort of stillness. Finally, my poor student had grasped the laws of nature thanks to me. As the teacher who did his best to teach his student, I could only be proud.

Even the name of this law was straightforward.

The law of the jungle.

Realizing who was the hunter and who was the prey.

To make them regret how irresponsible they were for having plucked the mane of a lion.

Whenever I made fools, those who believed that they were the people in power, realize that they were nothing more than pork tripe on top of a grill, it felt like I was contributing to the nature of all things within this speck



of dust in the universe and thus made me feel pleased. It would be fine to say that this was one of the very few pleasures in my life.

“How, that…….”

Ivar Lodbrok’s voice shook.

“How, do you know……?”

“Your **blonde hair** is quite beautiful.”

Another loveable silence fell before us.

Ivar Lodbrok.

There was no way that I wouldn’t know about this old gentlemen’s identity.

《Dungeon Attack》 was a game played in the perspective of the human hero. That was why the hero was not able to have a close relationship with the demons. You went around slaying all kinds of demons anyways, so who would want such a thing?

Regardless, there was a unique vampire heroine who would surrender to the hero. She would overcome the racial gap between each other and fall in love with the hero. There was even a special route made specifically for her in the game.

The heroine’s name, Ivar Lodbrok.

That was so.

The true identity of this old gentleman with a wicked

appearance was a heroine whose growth had forever stopped, leaving her with the appearance of a young girl.

That was why I was surprised when I first saw this old man, since their appearance from head to toe was completely different with their in-game character.

— That’s Ivar Lodbrok?”

— Yes. That man is the wealthiest person in the demon world, the owner of Keuncuska Firm, and a true vampire, Ivar Lodbrok.

I was able to mostly grasp what the hidden circumstances were.

According to the scenarios revealed in <Dungeon Attack>, Ivar Lodbrok’s story was like so: In the past she was incredibly loyal to a certain Demon Lord, but she was abruptly betrayed by the very Demon Lord she was serving and faced a near death situation. Afterwards, Ivar Lodbrok swore that she will never be used by a Demon Lord again and in order to fulfil that goal, she had begun to live her life while moving her conscience around her dolls, while cursing and scorning every Demon Lord.

Ivar Lodbrok betrayed the Demon Lord Allied Forces at a decisive moment, and was one of the main reasons as to why the hero’s forces were able to obtain victory.

It was an exemplary case showing that it wasn't too late for a noble person to achieve revenge even if it took 100 years.

As a person who had played through all of Ivar Lodbrok's scenarios and her specific route—I, of course, knew of her real appearance, and also knew very well the fact that her real body was hidden under the snowy fields of the kingdom of Moscow.

It was a secret that Ivar had whispered to only the hero.

Since the hero wasn't to appear until the year 1515 on the Continental calendar, in this current time, it was a tragedy that no one was supposed to know of.

Except for me.

"I am not concerned about something like your old body. I'm merely worried for the girl whose body is buried underneath a cold snowy field that is being ravaged by blizzards……."

"……."

"Aah, I truly am worried. I fear that wolves may appear abruptly and tear off her pitiful limbs. And who knows when villanous mountain thieves would appear and violate her body as they please. That's so. For example, if I were to give a small signal."

I snapped my fingers.

“There’s a possibility that a certain magic signal would be sent and a calamity would fall upon that girl’s frail body. Like a small cry would cause a massive avalanche. Chief, do not worry so much. It is fine to not look at me with such fearful eyes! I am simply pointing out the possibilities.”

Ivar Lodbrok’s body was trembling immensely.

It should be fine to stop treating him with this unamusing half-respect.

I changed my sarcastic tone to a clearly threatening tone.

“Oh pitiful vampire. Did you rage at the thought that Lapis Lazuli had betrayed you? ‘Let’s trample over this child who had dared to show her fangs to me’. Did you make that sort of decision? Aah, Lodbrok. You poor friend.”

I laughed.

“You had firmly guessed wrong. You were mistaken. Lapis Lazuli did not hunt me. Of course, she is a very admirable child, but is she capable of planning this kind of magnificent comedy……?”

I hunted her.

I kindly whispered in Ivar Lodbrok’s ear.

“From the beginning to the end, it was all your foolish misunderstanding. Lapis Lazuli had sworn her loyalty to you. But since she is a clever child, she knew full well that if she were to return to the firm, then under false accusation she would be purged. If the true miserable person was not that girl, then I didn’t know who was. Because of a single bastard bat, who lived their life thinking that they were a genius, she has fallen to being an exile.”

Ivar Lodbrok’s trembling became more violent.

I softly placed my hand on the other party’s shoulder.

“Thanks to you for making the wrong assumption, I was able to go through less trouble. Lapis Lazuli is a splendid child. I give you my thanks.”

“What does…… what does your highness want from this one……?”

“Oh. I simply want a slight bit of kindness.”

I gripped Ivar Lodbrok’s shoulder tightly.

“I truly did not release something like this Black Death. All you have to do is testify the truth. That is all.”

Do not present proof that would help make Paimon’s statement more persuasive.

It was a threat containing that meaning.

“Well……of course, you will also move around

occasionally as my puppet. A price follows defeat, after all. Chief. I am an honest person. I will not place hypocritical words between us, like telling you nice things such as reassuring you that there will be no more misfortune from now on, and that it was fine to relax. Do you not think that hypocrisy is a discourtesy to others?"

"....."

"Many things will change."

From the inside of your bones.

"I will give you many proposals that you cannot refuse, and you, in reality, will not be able to turn any of them down. You may occasionally have a sense of shame that you didn't feel like a person, but like a beast trapped in a pig pen."

Climbing up your spine.

"Occasionally you will display a rebellious spirit and resist against me. Shall I tell you how I will respond beforehand? Ah, I will not kill you. Really. I won't even hit you. You can have my word. What I will do....."

To your skull.

"Is pluck the hair from your real body."

Everything will be subjected to me.

"I will not take a lot. Every time you resist, I will only

pluck a single strand of hair. Pluck, like that. Just playfully. That is all. How is that? Were you able to feel how generous of a person I was?"

"....."

"While appreciating your beautiful face. *Pluck, pluck, pluck, pluck..... pluck.*"

With a 'hoo' I blew into his ear.

Ivar Lodbrok shuddered like an aspen leaf.

This was why I couldn't stop my enjoyment of threatening others.

"Hmm. I'm already looking forward to the day that you rebel against me. I can't wait. But, I will endure it. I will gladly endure it. I have great patience, after all. You can feel relieved in that regard."

Ivar Lodbrok clenched his teeth.

"This one..... will swear loyalty to no one."

"Even better."

I patted Ivar Lodbrok's shoulder lightly.

"Use this opportunity to learn."

"....."

"People have to keep learning even if they're old, you know. If one becomes lazy with their education then before they know it they'd have turned into a **failure**. A person must care and treasure their own body. Don't

you think so as well?”

Ivar Lodbrok could not respond.

If it was this much, then I believed that my sincerity was able to overcome the language barrier placed between us. Communication was this difficult. For me to have to resort to threats in order to make other people respect me, was that not tragic? When Oedipus had stabbed his own eyes, he was probably not as sad as I was now.

I straightened my back.

Then, I turned to look at the judge, Marbas.

“Oh, honorable Marbas. Our conversation is over. There will be no objections from myself if you are to continue the procedures of the hearing.”

“Good. Paimon, you can now prove the authenticity of your accusation.”

The hearing resumed.

Paimon, with a confident voice, called for Ivar Lodbrok.

“I understand. Lodbrok, please show the evidence.”

“.....”

“Lodbrok?”

A frightening silence continued.

Ivar Lodbrok had not lifted his head since awhile back.

Paimon had called his name several times, but he remained unresponsive. Because of the unexpected silence, a panicked complexion had appeared on Paimon's face. As the silence continued, her perplexed state had slowly spread to the people around her, until eventually, the entire ballroom was enshrouded by a peculiar silence.

At last, Ivar Lodbrok opened his mouth.

".....Her highness Paimon's statement, is a lie."

It was quiet.

It was incredibly quiet.

The hall was not calm because everyone had understood Ivar Lodbrok's comment. It was the complete opposite. It was because not a single person had understood what Ivar Lodbrok had said, so there was no response.

"What did you——"

Therefore, the first words to come out were not of understanding but was a question instead.

"Just now, what did you say?"

"This one. Had said that this one cannot submit the evidence that her highness Paimon had requested."

"What are you trying to say..... have you gone mad, Lodbrok!"

Paimon let out a roar.

The silence that had fallen on top of the ballroom quickly shattered. Like a rising tide suddenly turning into a tsunami on a calm beach, Paimon's limitless rage came pouring out. The pride she had on her face had already long ago been washed away by the tides.

"You had told this lady! That Dantalian was the culprit to abet the plague, and that that girl named Lapis Lazuli was the one to have spread the Black Death! Are you trying to ridicule this lady with that petty tongue!?"

".....My apologies. This one is unable to understand what your highness Paimon is talking about. Has it not been 10 years since we had last met each other in person like this?"

How beautiful.

With a smooth smile, I watched their quarrel.

There was something about witnessing people continuously shift the responsibility to one another that moved me deeply. Ah, I really shouldn't live with other people. Ah, shutting myself away and spending the rest of my days in the corner of my room was truly the right way to live. It reminded me of these sort of life lessons.

You're watching this too, are you not, Lapis Lazuli. I had promised you that I would show you the greatest

circus performance in the world. On one side was the rank 9 high noble Demon Lord, and on the other side was the richest person in the demon world. And yet, the point that these two had reached was childishy tossing the responsibility to one another.

For you, who lived your life being treated unfairly because you were an Untouchability, I considered this to be the greatest stage performance just for you. Enjoy it at your leisure. Since I had specially directed and managed this performance for free. Despite how I looked, if I splurged for my subordinates, then I was a superior that did so extravagantly. It was fine to be moved.

“That is obvious since you had made contact with me using your subordinate!”

“This one is incapable of knowing what Torukel had told your highness Paimon. Regardless, there is one thing that this one does know. Evidence that his highness Dantalian had any personal involvement with the spreading of the disease is currently not in this one’s possession.”

“This, inferior and cowardly bat……!”

Paimon’s pretty face had contorted. As much as she was a beauty that appeared as if she was a piece of art, her enraged image was more terrifying.

“So be it then. You shall repay blood with blood! That is your Keuncuska Firm’s maxim, is it not! This lady shall very much keep that vow……!”

A blood-like aura began to seep out from Paimon’s body.

The concentration of magical energy was so thick that it was possible to see the shape and color of her aura. The fluctuation of the energy looked as if dozens of red tongues were waving intensely.

Paimon was not simply a Demon Lord, she was someone who had also gained the title of archmage.

Among the Demon Lords that consisted of 71 people, it was a feat that was only achieved by 4 individuals, and she was part of that 4.

“I shall act on behalf of vengeance!”

Paimon had shouted her dictum.

A dictum, in this world, was something that was passed down throughout history in each area of influential power. These were sacred vows that dictated that one would utilize everything, even one’s own life, in order to keep one’s pledge. Paimon was seriously intending to kill Ivar Lodbrok.

It was then that Marbas had stomped his right foot down.

Thud

The entire ballroom had shaken.

People stumbled as if they had been caught up in a small earthquake.

Marbas, with a menacingly cold air around him, glared at Paimon.

“—Cease your offensive actions immediately.”

Paimon made a pained expression.

“But, Marbas!”

“I said to stop this instant. You should be vigilant of forcing me to recite my dictum as well, Paimon. You are the person who requested for a last chance. Just to make myself clear, to me, one’s last chance means their ultimatum.”

“Euh……!”

Paimon clenched her teeth strongly.

Her magical energy did not die down, but it had started to rise more intensively.

“Just now, the chief executive from Keuncuska had toyed with this lady! Despite the fact that that chief had ordered his subordinate, Torukel, to show evidence to this lady, he was now trying to back down! This lady shall immediately execute that betrayer!”

“No matter who it is!”

Marbas roared out.

“Even if Baal were to come here, you cannot shed blood during the Walpurgis Night! You will preserve absolute neutrality while you are here! Unless you wish to turn myself and all the Demon Lords of the neutral faction, including 30,000 elite troops, into your enemy, then go ahead and try shedding blood here, Paimon! I will vow that on that day, the mountain faction, which you lead will be annihilated, and the land of the Demon Lords who are part of your faction will be cursed for 300 years, preventing even a single blade of grass from growing!”

An angry voice like a thunderstorm swept over the ballroom.

The candles which were floating in mid-air shook violently. Light and darkness fell upon people while being mixed up chaotically, the pillars of the building let off dust as it trembled.

People shrunk back. They were being overwhelmed by Marbas' force.

Among the over 30 Demon Lords present here, the amount of people who were able to keep their backs straight were very few. At best, Barbatos was the only one to be nonchalantly sipping wine.

“Geezer—. If needed, us plains faction will provide you assistance whenever you want as well. Honestly, don’t you feel a bit apprehensive to go to war with only the neutral faction on your side? You and I could make a nice alliance.”

“Shut your mouth, Barbatos. I am not in the mood to jest.”

“I was just expressing my goodwill.”

Barbatos snickered.

Different to her, Paimon’s expression could only be explained as nothing but horrendous. From her lips, heated breaths were coming out like a cocktail of rage and self-control.

“Torukel……!”

Paimon chewed on her own words.

“He’s the messenger that passed on the orders from Ivar Lodbrok! He is standing by outside the venue right now. I shall summon him this instant and prove that Ivar Lodbrok has ridiculed this lady!”

A brief moment of chilling silence drifted through the venue.

Marbas took off his monocle and stared hard at Paimon.

“Are you certain?”

“This lady is only making accusation following truth.”

“.....You are taking my final faith.”

Marbas raised his chin up.

“Send in the witness known as Torukel!”

The faeries, having received the order, busily made their way out of the ballroom.

Aah.

I was submerged in sadness.

Think more calmly, Paimon. Whoever this Torukel was, he was still nothing more than a messenger. You can't hope to get a proper testimony from that kind of person.

I understand that you respect every race including humans. To you, this Black Death would be a nightmare among nightmares. You most likely partook in this gathering while being resolute in finding the culprit to have cause such a tragedy. But the person that you thought to be your comrade, Ivar Lodbrok, had unexpectedly betrayed you. That's why it was reasonable for you to be up to your head with anger. Despite that, you had to look ahead. Rage was always a shortcut to ruin.

Shortly after, an aged goblin entered the ballroom.

Paimon pointed at the goblin.

“Yes. That person is Torukel!”

She started her questioning with a voice still carrying anger.

“Torukel. You’ll be our witness. You, under the orders of Ivar Lodbrok, had acted the role of messenger. Is that correct?”

“.....”

Torukel slowly looked around the room.

The goblin was supporting his body with a cane. There may have been many wrinkles on his forehead, but his eyes shone with intellect. I got the strong impression that he was not old, but he had simply lived for a long period of time.

The goblin looked at Ivar Lodbrok for a short moment and nodded. No words were exchanged between them.

Torukel carefully opened his lips.

“.....It is an honor to be allowed in the presence of all these lords of demons. Keruk. This one, without a doubt, is an executive from the Keuncuska Firm, and am also of close relations with Ivar Lodbrok.”

As soon as Torukel readily revealed his own identity, Paimon’s face shone with delight. She most likely thought that she had seized victory. Like a machine gun, she started her questioning quickly.

“This lady shall get straight to the point, Torukel. You

had told this lady that Dantalian had aided the spreading of the plague and that using some unknown means, he had a hand in the creation of the Black Death. Is this lady correct?”

“Yes. Of course, your highness.”

The audience started to stir once more.

Ivar Lodbrok shut his eyes tightly as if he was distressed. On the other hand, Paimon, with a triumphant air, smiled widely. It was the figure of an individual who had overcome ridicule and painstakingly materialized justice.

However.

“What her highness has said is correct. I had most certainly claimed that Dantalian was the criminal behind the Black Death. However, that was a downright lie. It was slander without any evidence.”

“What……?”

It didn’t even take 10 seconds for the shock to solidify Paimon’s smile.

Torukel spoke flatly.

“This one had desired for the black herbs that were in the possession of his highness Dantalian. Of course, it would be impossible for this one, alone, to extort the personal effects of his highness Dantalian. However, this

one was in the possession of two great sponsors. Her highness Paimon and the chief of executives, Ivar Lodbrok. Perhaps if this one were to use these two individual's names, then it would be possible to get through the impasse. That was what I had thought."

"Torukel..... just, what are you saying......"

Paimon opened her mouth.

It was a face of utter disbelief.

Torukel, using his cane to support himself, bowed deeply.

"My apologies. This one knew full well of your highness' care for all the people on the continent. This one had used your highness' merciful heart in order to incite hatred towards his highness Dantalian. His highness Dantalian was merely rank 71st anyways. This one had judged that once the hearing was open that it would end on the majority vote."

"....."

"As it so had happened, his highness Dantalian had murdered his highness Andromalius and this one had seen that as a golden opportunity. To threaten his highness Dantalian with the atrocious crime of murdering a Demon Lord. Using that chance, this one had planned to snatch away all of the black herbs. But his highness

Dantalian had surpassed this one's expectations and was able to prove his innocence. How vexing…….”

Torukel glanced at me slightly.

I gazed back at him with absolutely no emotions on my face.

Unintentionally, with a ‘tsk’, I ended up clicking my tongue. I could grasp what that aged merchant was basically trying to do. He was intending to foil this great circus performance.

The judge, Marbas, sharply inquired Torukel.

“Small goblin. You have admitted yourself that you had ridiculed Paimon in order to fulfill your own selfish desires. Do you understand your crimes?”

“Yes, your highness. This one knows when to admit defeat. This one had tried to gain great profit by using her highness Paimon and the chief executive of the Keuncuska Firm. And I had failed. That is all.”

The goblin shook his head.

“If there was something wrong that her highness Paimon had done, then it was having trusted this wicked and old goblin. Thus, since all faults completely lies on this one—although from a humble birth.”

Quickly.

Before anyone could do anything.

Torukel took a small blade out from his clothes
“This one shall apologize with this insignificant life.”
—and stabbed his own throat.

□ *Keuncuska Executive, Miser Goblin, Torukel*
Empire Calendar: Year 1505, Month 8, Day 20
Niflheim, Governors' Palace

We had failed.

I knew this as soon as I had entered the ballroom.

Even if I didn't want to, when her highness Paimon, who was supposed to be expressing kindness towards me, was staring at me with a terribly contorted face, I had no choice but to come to terms with it.

.....I was prepared.

Merchants must always respect equal exchange.

Even if Demon Lord Dantalian was merely rank 71st, and even if Lapis Lazuli was merely an Untouchability half-breed, they too were lives that did whatever it took to stay alive.

A life for a life.

You had to put your own life on the line if you were to go after another.

Keruk.

It was a simple equation.

……I dreamed for a world that was not controlled by hierarchy.

For merely being born as a Demon Lord you stood at the pinnacle of society. For being born between a demon and a human, you were treated like trash. That was the current state of the demon world. I wanted to change this…….

Although some minute details were different, Ivar Lodbrok carried the same desire as myself. In this shabby world, Ivar and I were tied by camaraderie.

If one wished to change the world, then one needed money. That was why we had raised the Keuncuska Firm this far. Over the past hundreds of years, we had overcome an uncountable amount of hardship and adversity, and had barely reached the position of the greatest firm in the demon world…….

Aaah.

I really did want to see it.

A bit more equal society.

I simply wanted to live in a place with less prejudice.

.....I wanted to see a more beautiful world.

“Kuruk!”

I could feel the cold metal piercing my throat.

As one would expect, I could vividly feel the warm blood that was dripping down the blade.

Strength left my knees quickly. My body fell over slowly, and little by little it approached death. I could feel all this clearly.

Ivar. Take care of the rest.

I was unable to see the world change, but if it's you, then you should be able to live till the very end. You are frighteningly cunning and intelligent after all.

Except, I worry that there may be no one who could understand your madness. Do not stay in solitude. One day you will find someone who will stay by your side once again.....

And finally, I turned to look at Dantalian.

There was no special reason to this. My line of sight had simply moved to Dantalian coincidentally when I had fallen down. However, after looking at the face of the rank 71st Demon Lord, I opened my eyes wide.

“.....!”

He was expressionless.

There was no bounds to how expressionless he was.

Despite having obtained a surprising victory tonight, there was not a single sign of Dantalian being delighted or overjoyed. It didn't even seem like he was surprised by my suicide. As if it was obvious—he was staring down at me with eyes that appeared as if they **understood completely** why I had chosen to kill myself.

Was that it…… was that what it was……!

Seeing that expression, I immediately understood. Demon Lord Dantalian was not plain prey. Lapis Lazuli betraying our firm, and the murder of Andromalius, they were all schemes plotted by that man. It was not possible to know exactly what the plots were, but those eyes. **Those eyes of a murderer**, surpassing logic, were more than enough to convince me. Dantalian was the puppeteer!

Aah, Ivar Lodbrok.

From beginning to end we were mistaken.

We had dived on top of a chessboard with no idea who our opponent was. Because of this, it was no wonder that we had lost so gruesomely. Have you realized, Ivar? Were you aware of the fact that that man was the true danger…….

I wanted to open my mouth and warn Ivar. To please be careful of Dantalian.

But to my dismay, I did not have even a margin of energy left to move my lips. Rapidly. Life from my body dispersed silently. The vision in front of me faded to black.

I may have dreamed a beautiful dream, but I was unable to live a beautiful life. I have committed a fair amount of evil deeds. No doubt the Gods will drop me to Hell…….

Ooh, merciful Proserpina.

Please show pity for this poor soul.

And then, I was enshrouded by eternal silence…….

□ *Weakest Demon Lord, Rank 71st, Dantalian*
Empire Calendar: Year 1505, Month 8, Day 20
Niflheim, Governors' Palace

The dagger easily pierced the neck of the old goblin.
The blade had impaled through his thin neck and
stuck out from the other side.

The goblin's small body collapsed to the floor with a
thud.

A stillness fell over the room.

Red blood was flowing in the ballroom.

“Ah……?”

Paimon was.

“Ah……aah……?”

Paimon was merely staring down at the goblin's corpse.

That goblin was a merchant that Paimon had trusted
without an ounce of doubt. It was clear that for a long
time, a very long time, these two had known each other.



I wonder if her knees had given out, but Paimon had sunk to the floor. The blood flowing out from the goblin's neck formed a puddle and the end of Paimon's skirt became drenched with that blood.

"Aah……ah, aaah……."

Like a broken record, she let out short moans repetitively.

It was a conclusion that she couldn't have possibly predicted to have happened 30 minutes ago. Paimon may have only been moaning, but I distinctively understood the emotions that were grasping onto her heart.

That was why I had warned her.

To not cross the Rubicon River and reconcile with a glass of wine instead. But, without being able to realize anything, Paimon had raised a poisoned chalice. This was probably what a tragedy was.

I muttered in a voice that only I could hear.

"Spoiled the mood……."

You have really caused quite the chaos, you goblin bastard.

Originally, I was planning to direct a comedy. Ivar Lodbrok and Paimon were to blame each other. They would behave disgracefully and keep tossing the responsibility to the other person until the conference was

over.

In the end, one side would eventually have their honor damaged and fall. That was the scenario I had written. People would have sent unreserved applause to the circus performance of a lion and a tiger fighting each other. However, this old goblin was a variable that I could not have possibly expected…….

Torukel had bore all the mistakes of Ivar Lodbrok and Paimon on his own, and had brought them down with him. Paimon's misunderstanding was because of Torukel's trickery, and Ivar Lodbrok's excuse was because of Torukel's cajolment.

The two as victims. The one as the assailant. Except, no words could come from a corpse. The day that the truth was finally revealed will never come to be.

I sincerely give you my respect for that resolution of yours, goblin.

Ivar Lodbrok and Paimon had gone against me with a clumsy mindset. They did not risk their lives. But you were different. You came at me with all you had. Unlike those two, you did not forget about proper etiquette.

That was splendid.

I must admit. People like you were more than qualified to interfere with my comfortable life.

“—We shall proceed with the show of hands for the hearing.”

Marbas spoke.

The only witness had killed himself and Paimon had lost her will. He must have judged that there was no point in continuing the hearing any further.

“The first issue is the murder case. The case where rank 72nd, Nameless Demon Lord Andromalius was murdered by rank 71st, Nameless Demon Lord Dantalian. The accuser has demanded 100,000 libra as compensation for the murder of Andromalius from Dantalian, and for Dantalian himself to be locked away in the Frozen Prison for 15 years.”

Marbas looked around the venue.

“Those who think Dantalian is guilty raise your right hand, the people who think he is innocent raise your left hand, and the people who are abstaining do not move your hands. The two people who are directly involved, and myself who has taken the role as the mediator, will not have the rights to vote.”

People promptly moved their arms after Marbas had finished explaining.

Among the 29 Demon Lords, the ones to have voted guilty were 9 people.

The people to have voted innocent was 19.

Marbas nodded.

“I declare that Dantalian is innocent in regards to the first matter.”

Excluding Paimon’s followers, nearly every Demon Lord had voted innocent. In truth, it was an overwhelming victory. And yet, the aftertaste was still bitter. It was because of that old goblin’s noble sacrifice. I didn’t feel as excited as I was before…….

“The second issue is about the Black Death. The accuser had claimed that Dantalian was the true culprit to have spread the plague. Those of you who think this is true, raise your left hand, those who think it is false, your right hand.”

The people to have voted guilty were the same 9 individuals.

The people to have voted innocent was 15 individuals.

“Since it has surpassed the majority, I declare that Dantalian is innocent in regards to the second matter. Thus, on the name of rank 5th, the Demon Lord in charge of nobleness, I, Marbas, guarantee that you, Dantalian, are free from all charges. Those of you who have any objections to this verdict must keep in mind that you’ll be challenging my honor.”

Applause erupted from one of the Demon Lords. It was Barbatos this time as well. She was even whistling as she celebrated the verdict.

“Hahaha! Serves you right, whore! Ever since you started raising your nose thinking you were all high and mighty, I was looking forward to seeing that nose of yours get crushed! Seeing as it has come to this, why not spend some ‘time(屍姦)¹⁰⁾’ with that goblin! You two will probably be a perfect match in bed!”

……Although the direction of the celebration was horrendously vulgar.

Right now Paimon, with unfocused eyes, was staring down vacantly at Torukel’s corpse. To be able to openly laugh at a woman in that state, those weren’t normal nerves, but was immense brutality instead. It was impressive in another meaning. I gained the certainty that if I wanted to maintain a peaceful life, then it would be a good idea to not get involved with Barbatos.

Her chest was also flat.

Her chest was as flat as the Siberian fields—.

It was important so I emphasized it twice.

10) TL note: ‘time’ is a play on words here. It can be read as “shi-gan” in Korean, which means the passage of time, but here it is using a Chinese word that is pronounced the same but with a different meaning. It basically means ‘necrophilia’.

If you were a logical person with refinement then it was obvious to prefer matureness over immaturity, abundance over lacking. Lolita complex is a mental illness, everyone. I hope you are able to go to your nearest mental hospital and get a suicide check-up.

“Now, we shall discuss Paimon’s punishment. Dantalian. Despite your innocence, Paimon had tried to accuse you. One must pay the price for failure. Suggest what you think would be the most fitting level of punishment.”

“A penalty, huh…….”

I looked down at the floor.

In the past, court controversy had a meaning similar to that of a duel. Putting their honor on the line, both sides fought over what was guilty and innocent. If the accuser were to lose, then they would receive the very sentencing that they had declared for the other party. It meant that if you wanted to curse another, then you had to dig your own grave first. It was a tough legacy from the medieval period.

In this situation, Paimon would have to pay the 100,000 gold fine and be confined for 15 years in prison. Once again, I understood what kind of harsh resolve Paimon was carrying while stepping forward in the

hearing. Was that so. It may not have been as much as the goblin, but Paimon had as well, in her own way, prepared to take responsibility…….

Then, all of a sudden a choice box appeared before me.

【1. Forgive Paimon.】

【2. Reprimand Paimon.】

Seeing this choice box appear, it meant that this was a crucial decision.

Similar to having chosen to murder Andromalius, this was something that would greatly change the direction of the world.

Marbas pressed me with a low voice.

“Dantalian.”

“…….”

I glanced at the goblin’s corpse.

Torukel. You did not leave a will. But what you wanted to say was conveyed clearly. No matter what, to not let Ivar Lodbrok or Paimon be troubled. Those were most likely the dying words that you could not spill out from your own mouth. The part of life that was so-called sorrow.

As a means to express my condolence to you, those dying words of yours, I shall respect it.

“It is fine.”

“Excuse me?”

“I said it is fine, honorable Marbas.”

I raised my head and faced Marbas.

I had a weak smile on my lips. It was in order to display a tired expression. Well, it had also been a long time since I had last used my brain this much, so I was actually a bit tired.

“Even if I was under false accusation and slandered, her highness Paimon was also in the sorry position of having been swept up in a plot, was she not? As it has already been proven to everyone here, the true culprit behind all these incidents was that goblin on the floor over there. He was a peerless villain. However, since he is dead, there is no reason to make someone else take responsibility.”

“In other words…… are you saying that you will not demand any punishment?”

“Yes, your honor. As the person directly involved in the hearing, and as the person to have survived the court of law by obtaining victory, with my just rights I shall request of this. Rank 71st, Nameless Demon Lord

Dantalian hereby requests, for her highness Paimon to not be punished in any way because of this incident.”

I grinned.

“In the first place, this is the sacred Walpurgis Night. This is not a location for such vulgar words like punishment or penalty to be tossed around.”

The people around me made a commotion. They probably didn’t imagine that the very person to be accused would come out so pleasantly. They all had the same expression of surprise. On the contrary, once I had watched the goblin kill himself, I couldn’t have been more calm.

I did not want to become a person who went around talking about ‘acknowledgement’ and ‘respect’ all the time. I had thought to acknowledge Torukel the goblin. I had decided to respect his will. Then I must show it by actions.

To forgive Paimon here was, with no doubt, a politically dangerous decision. In the political world, just by the mere fact that you were enemies one could continue to take hostile actions. Today, disregarding the truth, the relationship between Paimon and I had clearly become ‘enemies’. To change this relationship into a different form will probably take a considerable amount

of tiresome work. It may even be impossible.

That was what respect was.

To protect the other party's words even if it meant that you'd have to endure harm.

I was confident that I would not feel anguish even if I were to go through hardship for respecting another.

If I used my second half little sister's judgement as a basis, then I was in the possession of a devilish brain.

If I used my own judgement as a basis, then I was model student who knew etiquette.

"Honorable Marbas. The only thing that this one wants tonight is a single warm glass of honey wine."

【1. Forgive Paimon.】

【2. Reprimand Paimon.】

As soon as I had finished talking, the choice box melted away.

Soon, the choice box was replaced by new lines.

Each individual letter was dismantled and put together to form new words. It gave the subtle pleasure like watching lego bricks being assembled on their own.

【A kind and merciful decision!】

【The continent is impressed by your magnanimity.】

【Fame increased substantially.】

The sentences glowed brightly in mid-air.

The words broke apart into sparkling particles. Then shortly after, after drifting through the air like a bunch of petals, they silently vanished off to somewhere.

“.....”

Marbas was staring at me. His blue eyes would make one think of a serene ocean. I did not avoid Marbas and calmly met his gaze.

“To think of duty over resentment. In words, it sounds easy, but words have the tendency of becoming harder to adhere if they are shorter, and becoming easier to keep if they are longer. It is not something that anyone can do. Additionally, the amount of people to turn down the opportunity to lawfully vent one’s spite is a precious few.”

Marbas patted my shoulder. His trust was transmitted through his hand.

“You are remarkable, Dantalian. As the host of this Walpurgis Night, I’d like to give you my thanks. I look forward to the day that you are able to be rid of your Nameless Demon Lord status and become a monarch

possessing a grand title.”

【Demon Lord Marbas’ affection went up by 9.】

Instead of responding with words, I lowered my head.

Marbas had said that he did not trust long talks earlier. So to go beyond short words and respond with silence was appropriate to go along with Marbas’ beliefs. Marbas seemed to have understood my intent. He nodded and patted my shoulder once more.

“—However, even if there is to be no official punishment, it would be irrational to not have even one word of apology. Paimon.”

Marbas turned around to look at Paimon. She was still sitting in a daze at the side of the goblin’s body. She was like a doll that had all her strings cut. Marbas spoke to her with a pained face.

“Apologize to Dantalian here.”

Paimon flinched.

“……Apol, igitize……?”

“Yes. That is the responsibility that you must carry.”

“Lied…… Torukel…… lie, d”

Paimon moved her body to get up, but failed. There was no strength in her knees, so she had simply slipped

back down. Paimon lifted her head barely to look at me.

“Did Torukel…… betray, this lady?”

I nodded.

“That is so. Your highness.”

“Innocent……?”

“Yes. I did not create the Black Death. I did not purposely spread it either. That was all a hoax created by that merchant, Torukel.”

Paimon slowly lowered her head. There was a moment of silence. I had no methods to know what she was thinking. Shortly after, with trembling shoulders, she muttered in a very small voice.

“……I……ry…….”

At first, we couldn't understand what she had said. Like a broken radio, her words would come out then stop and then rewind to start again. This repeated. The sound of crying was mixed in like static. However, Paimon repeated the same words over and over again, until eventually we could hear her loud and clear.

“I'm…… so, rry…….”

They were words of apology.

A pool of blood had formed on the ground which Paimon had fallen to. Something was falling there. They were Paimon's tears. Each time a tear collided against the

crimson puddle, like a pebble falling into a lake, gentle waves in the shape of rings would spread out.

“I’m sorry…….”

“…….”

“I’m sorry…… I’m sorry…….”

A peculiar silence swept over the ballroom.

Paimon’s voice was most certainly small, but it felt like her words could be heard by everyone here.

It must have been hard to keep watching. A female Demon Lord, who I assumed was one of Paimon’s followers, rushed out and started to support the frail woman. Paimon was weakly dragged outside by the female Demon Lord. A group of around 15 people followed that female Demon Lord out of the ballroom. No one tried to stop them.

“There were many complications, but.”

Wanting to change the topic, Marbas spoke.

“It does not change the fact that today is still the Walpurgis Night. Although there are still some agendas remaining, we can push that to tomorrow. I shall be taking up Barbatos’ suggestion and offer a place to drink to everyone here.”

With a ‘clap’, Marbas brought his hands together.

At once, faeries came in and began to serve all kinds

of food and beverages. Elves wearing maid uniforms and tailcoats entered the room carrying chairs and tables. The ballroom had instantly changed into a banquet hall. I also had the honor of being poured a glass of honey wine from Marbas directly.

People of power were rare. People of power with common sense were even more rare, to the point that they should be announced as a near extinct species and rated EX on the charts. I, with the desire to preserve nature's rare species, accepted the glass politely.

For the rest of the day, there was no occasion of Paimon showing her face again.

□ *Weakest Demon Lord, Rank 71st, Dantalian*
Empire Calendar: Year 1505, Month 8, Day 21
Niflheim, Governors' Palace

The banquet did not end even past midnight.

I had never imagined that Demon Lords would be such heavy drinkers. Barbatos was especially amazing. She picked up an entire jug of alcohol and chugged it down in one go.

People cheered and applauded. It was insane. Also, Barbatos seemed to have taken a liking to me cause she kept forcing me to drink. If I tried to refuse slightly then she'd say, "Aaang? Are you trying to resist drinking the alcohol that I'm bestowing to you?" and got heated up. Was this not a barbaric person, or what?

Not being able to socialize with her any longer, I secretly withdrew to the hallway. Truthfully, I wanted to

escape out the front gate, but there was the chance that I'd get caught by Barbatos.

Her outer appearance was that of a little girl but where was that tremendous amount of alcohol being consumed to? I couldn't understand. In my opinion, I thought that scientist needed to go through her stomach as soon as possible. I was certain that a miniature black hole was in there……. The problem was that the science in this world was not advanced. As a result, it was impossible to find out. It was an unsolvable mystery…….

My mind felt blank. I must have gotten drunk. I was walking through an empty hallway, and yet, everything in front of me felt like it was pulsating. Damn it. It was because that kid, born on the plains of Siberia, said "I'll show you my hidden treasure." and forced me to drink a concoction of 6 different alcohols. What did she mean by "Think of this as an honor. Not just anyone can taste this."? Go drink yourself to death…….

I could hear quiet footsteps behind me. Turning around, I saw that Lapis Lazuli was standing there. I courteously opened my arms.

"Ooh, Lala! My Lala! Your eyes are like azure and your voice is like a hymn sung in harmony!"

Ehem.

In actuality, I had spread my arms out in a bit of an exaggerated manner.

What? I'm drunk. It was beyond my control.

".....Your highness moved too rashly."

"What? I'm so great that you've fallen for me?"

"This one said that your highness has moved too rashly."

"To the point that you want to smooch me? That's great! If you knew how hard I worked to gain your affection, then you'd feel so sorry for me that you'd willingly offer me your lips."

"Your highness."

I shut my mouth.

Lapis Lazuli's gaze pierced right through me.

"Your highness is reckless, irresponsible, and rash."

".....Are you not deeply moved by my victory?"

"Yes."

"That's a bit of a shock."

It was as shocking as the time I had received a confession from a boy in the same class as me during elementary school.

"Paimon is not only the rank 9th Demon Lord, but she is also the leader of the mountain faction that is known as the greatest faction in the Demon Lord Allied Forces.

She is in command of many loyal followers and has a close relationship to people in power on the human side. In simpler terms, your highness has turned one of the most important figures of the Demon World into an enemy.”

“Wait. Wait a second, Lala.”

I waved my hands fiercely.

“……I am not reckless, I am not irresponsible, and I am not rash. These are words I’m hearing for the first time in my life. That’s incredibly insulting.”

“Is that so? What kind of plan is it that your highness had to turn the richest man and the leader of the greatest faction in the demon world, into enemies?”

“That…… that is…….”

It was no use.

My mind was still intoxicated by alcohol so I couldn’t think straight. It wasn’t an unsophisticated scenario where I could simply talk about it while being drunk. This was like the most elaborate machinery in the world.

“That is, it’s tremendously…….”

“Tremendously?”

“Amazing…… and frighteningly great…… that kind of plan!”

“Your highness possesses quite the impressive persuasive

ability. This one was so moved that this one had become at a loss for words.”

“My eyes and ears could be failing me at the same time, but your tongue sure is moving a lot for being at a loss for words.”

“It is a relief that your highness has enough rationality to notice that.”

“Ooh!”

Like a dreadful actor, I shouted up at the ceiling.

“I’m sorry, Lala! That’s right! I have gone completely mad! After being accused by Paimon and seeing that old bat laughing at me from the side, all my self-control ended up exploding! That’s why I showed them a lesson! I can not even begin to grasp how I could possibly repent for my tremendous mistake to our succubus lady!”

I turned my body around and bowed. It was the location completely opposite of where Lapis Lazuli was. Of course, there was no one there. Thanks to the moonlight coming in from the window, I could just barely make out the shape of the floor.

No, since I could see a bit there wasn’t absolutely no one there. A gray cat was perched on the window sill and licking its paw. I bowed deeper to the cat.

“I apologize, Paimon! I apologize, followers of Paimon

and to the supporters of Ivar Lodbrok! I have refuted and crushed these people who you all so love very much! They accused me for a crime that I did not commit, they raised their nose high just because they had an authority as big as a finger nail in this large universe of ours, and they were individuals that didn't know how to respect others, but everyone must have loved these two dearly anyways. Ooh, the Goddesses will rain their rage down upon me! Oh, Erbus, oh, Nemesis, the most terrifying Goddesses! If, perhaps, you are all up there in the sky—if you are doing nothing and looking down at me from your seats—.”

I looked upwards like a prophet who was receiving commandments directly from God. My body moved seriously and my voice rang splendidly. I looked as if I was receiving the award for the best leading actor of the year.

“I may be too educated and overflowing with refinement to properly believe in Goddesses, so I can not say with certainty that you all do exist up in the sky, but, if by some astronomical chance, you all are really up there—Goddesses! Do not forgive this piece of trash Dantalian who has ridiculed the leader of the greatest faction and the richest person in the demon world and

smite me!”

“.....”

“However, if I were to speak subjectively—albeit, I do think that this subjective opinion of mine is objectively the truth and have no doubt about it, in any case, as much as I need to be a bit modest while in front of the Goddesses, I shall speak subjectively **out of pure courtesy**—If you agree with my **personal opinion** that Paimon and Ivar Lodbrok are both terribly unlucky and are both rotten pork tripe that are on the boundary of becoming unrecyclable—then you damned Goddesses! Please do nothing, do absolutely nothing, and allow me to live my life as I please! Since I am **1000 times** more competent than some Goddesses that sit around and piss all day!”

.....

Silence.

The gray cat was surprised and looking this way with wide opened eyes. The cat must have forgotten that it was grooming its own fur since its front paw had frozen in mid-air. It wasn't strange. It had the honor of being a witness to my powerful and grandeur confession of faith, after all. It was like someone was resting at the backside of a mountain and then suddenly Moses came

walking down from the mountain top. I could understand the feelings of a cat. That was how much understanding I was overflowing with.

“Hoo, uhoo…….”

I settled my breathing.

Now the intoxication was dissipating.

I turned around and faced Lapis Lazuli. She was staring at me with her same as usual expressionless face. I lifted my index finger and pointed up towards the ceiling.

“Look at that. **Nothing happened.**”

“…….”

“Thinking logically, we can derive three conclusions from this. First, the Goddesses has generously forgiven my reckless, irresponsible, and rash antics. Oh, Lala, you are indeed a very distinguished girl, and there is a chance that you’re more distinguished than I am — Of course, that is a topic of much debate — but clearly you are not as distinguished as the Goddesses. Thus, second, since the Goddesses have forgiven me, you must forgive me as well. That is what having a modest attitude means, after all. And finally, third, the Goddesses has admitted that Paimon and Ivar Lodbrok are similar to that of rotten pork tripe. Thus, the act of threatening them is

theologically, juristically, and ethically not a problem. Now then. If you have anything to say against my absolutely perfect logic, then go ahead.”

A moment of stillness returned to the hallway.

We stared each other for a while.

Lapis Lazuli then opened her mouth.

“Is your highness done talking?”

“Mhm.”

“Does this one need to point out that your highness has used the beginning rhetorical technique of ‘using a false premise’?”

“Nope.”

“Is there a reason this one needs to remind your highness how politically dangerous it is to intensely declare in a public place of one’s militant atheism?”

“There are none.”

“How does your highness think this one should react to the lord who’s logically, politically and theologically guilty?”

“I do not think anything of it.”

“This one had thought so.”

“Lala. I truly am unable to explain it properly because I am still intoxicated, but I assure you that I have already planned out a perfect scheme that’ll put you at a

lost for words. I'll explain it to you after a short rest, and then even you will admire it. So for now, let us return to our room, lay on the bed, and discuss the rest……."

"This one knows."

"Huh?"

"This one believes that your highness is devising a thorough plan."

I blinked.

"That is, uh, what do I say…… rather unexpected."

"This one knows that your highness' true nature is like that of a predator, a spider to be exact. Before taking one step, your highness looks forward 10 steps, and if there is no certainty of a perfect hunt, then your highness waits patiently. People may think your highness is a good-for-nothing deadbeat when they see your highness not move and they will laugh in ridicule for it, but in truth, your highness is simply waiting for your prey to get caught in the web for you."

"……Thank you for the compliment?"

My head felt blank so I wasn't very certain, but I think this was the first time Lapis Lazuli had ever praised me like this. Not knowing how to react in that moment, I creased my brows.

“Then why did you ill-treat me?”

“Since your highness’ mentality is so twisted, this one had judged that your highness required a vassal that would constantly be by your side and scold your highness.”

“Lala. I am a full grown adult. I do not have any reason whatsoever to get a new mother figure now and hear nagging…….”

It was then.

Slowly.

Lapis Lazuli had casually grabbed my necktie.

In my short moment of confusion, Lapis Lazuli pulled.

I did not know exactly what kind of physical principle was hidden within this action, but the result was simple and obvious.

Lapis Lazuli had stolen my lips.



“.....”

“.....”

I could feel something soft on my lips.

I wonder if about 10 seconds had passed. We steadily drifted apart.

When two people split apart, it would feel unnatural even if they were to share hundreds of idle talk, but in this moment of silence, it felt perfectly natural to drift away. Once the kiss was over and we had regained our distance, I felt that that distance felt incredibly natural.

Lapis Lazuli whispered.

“I also do not intend to act as your highness’ mother.”

“.....Lala.”

I spoke carefully.

“I admit that over the period of time I have said many salacious lines like kissing. However, that was purely to enjoy watching your embarrassed reaction, and thus had no deeper meaning. If, by chance, I had planted a misunderstanding due to that, then I shall sincerely apologize here and.....”

“I know that as well. Your highness.”

Lapis Lazuli cut me off.

And once again, she pulled my necktie downwards.

“That’s why, please shut up.”

We buried ourselves under the dark hallway.

After the second kiss, who moved first, whose palm grasped the other's body first, and who was the first to push the other into the darkest corner of the hallway, we could not tell. It had become meaningless to discuss the order.

The only thing I could remember vividly were her silently glowing blue eyes.

Meoow

A gray cat meowed.

The cat bathed in the moonlight and stretched out tiredly.

FIN.

幕
間

Intermission

□ *Keuncuska Merchant, Mixed Blood, Lapis Lazuli*
Empire Calendar: Year 1505, Month 4, Day 5
Keuncuska Firm Office

Rank 71st, Demon Lord Dantalian.

The connection between myself and this foolish Demon Lord was rather deep.

1 year ago, by bribing the people in the firm, I had obtained the position of Dantalian's exclusive consultant.

Originally, the Keuncuska Firm did not treat Demon Lords below the rank of 60 as customers. It would lower the quality of the firm. That was the reason.

However, to me, a Demon Lord like Dantalian was essential. In order for an untouchable like myself to succeed, I had to use a Demon Lord. Demon Lords of a higher rank will most likely not bother even dealing with me. In that sense, Dantalian was the most suitable candidate.

It was fine to swear at me and call me a girl who was blinded by success.

It's true, after all.

"Hahaha. For the people of Keuncuska to come looking for the great me, you people do indeed have a good eye that befits the greatest firm in the demon world."

At first, Dantalian welcomed me with delight. To be accepted as a customer of Keuncuska had the same meaning as being recognized as an influential Demon Lord. He must have been happy.

"What is your name?"

"This one is called Lapis Lazuli."

"Oho. Your looks are quite outstanding."

His highness' gaze drifted over my body.

"....."

Should I say that he wasn't rank 71st for no reason? He gave off the rancid stench of being a small fry. He may have been born as a Demon Lord, but he had no character or talent.

But it was fine. I came here resolute that this would happen.

.....Well, if you were to ask if I was disappointed, then of course I would say I was.

“Good. What is your race?”

“I am a succubus, your highness.”

“A succubus! That makes it more charming.”

It may have only been half, but I was still a succubus. Even if my eyes were closed, I could sense the sexual desires of other people around me. Right now, Demon Lord Dantalian was lusting over me.

In my life, I had received hundreds and thousands of gazes from people desiring for my body. Yes, I had no intentions of acting clean at this point. I would more than gladly accept becoming a Demon Lord’s mistress.

A girl will sell her body for authority.

There’s nothing weird about that, right?

As a merchant, I thought that this attitude was very appropriate.

……Except, the problem was that there were no Demon Lords mad enough to buy my body.

“Raise your head. As today is the day that this great one has been recognized by the Keuncuska Firm, I am very pleased. Tonight, this great one shall open a banquet for you.”

“Your highness. This one is a mix blood between a succubus and a human.”

“.....”

Silence.

The Demon Lord's face instantly froze.

Yes. Despite having received hundreds and thousands of gazes full of carnal desire, the reason why I was still pure laid here. The reaction of every single person to hear of my birth was this. How amazing.

"The banquet is cancelled."

The Demon Lord quickly stood up.

"Go tell the merchants of Keuncuska. That they will pay dearly for having dared to humiliate this great one!"

"As this one is ordered to."

"This vulgar crossbreed."

Ptiu

The Demon Lord had spit.

The saliva landed directly on my face. I had heard that his highness Dantalian did not have any talent in martial arts, but it seems I shouldn't have believed in those rumors. Behold. Does he not at least have an aptitude for archery?

"....."

As soon as the Demon Lord had left the reception room.

I took out a hand mirror and a handkerchief. With trained hands, I wiped the saliva from my face. If you

thought that this kind of thing happened to me only once or twice, then that was a huge miscalculation.

Hundreds and thousands of times.

I said so before, right?

In short, Dantalian was a fool that was beyond saving. There were most likely no one who liked him, excluding his own mother. Although, Demon Lords aren't born between two people, but are naturally formed by a distorted concentration of magic.

It was fine.

I had made my resolve.

If the other party was trash that was beyond being of use, then all you had to do was **reform their personality anew.**

I had disguised myself as a human and sold maps of the Demon Lord castle to adventurers.

The number of troops, the location of traps, and even the patrol routes. I handed over everything.

The adventurers were quite avaricious.

As soon as they had obtained the map, they went straight for the Demon Lord castle. Was it three or four times? Due to the invading adventurers the castle quickly

turned into ruin.

In other words, it was shock therapy.

His highness Dantalian was most certainly a larva that was beyond remedy. But what if his castle was to be completely destroyed? What if all of his underlings were to die? **There was a chance that he would regain his senses.**

This kind of inverse concept was sort of my specialty.

I'll happily accept compliments.

Since compliments don't cost money.

Of course, I also had another aim.

Imagine what kind of position Demon Lord Dantalian would be in. The defenses of his castle had collapsed. His troops were obviously gone as well. Now where could he hang on to? The bed of his that was in a dump? Would the black mantle that Mr. Demon Lord went around wearing so proudly suddenly turn into a magic cape and create a miracle?

Ah.

Fortunately, there was one person remaining.

Was there not that **succubus merchant** who was acting as his exclusive consultant?

It was a simple modification.

If the other party didn't seem like they were going to

trust you—then get rid of every single individual that he could possibly trust, except yourself.

There may have been a path to slowly gain his trust over the course of time. But if there was one attribute that a merchant required, then it was the knowledge that ‘slowly’ was actually a synonym of ‘wasting time’.

I am a merchant of Keuncuska.

Any kind of waste was unpardonable.



The adventurers had destroyed the Demon Lord castle. However, they had failed in capturing his highness Dantalian. They came out of the cave with angry steps. They were about to go home empty-handed.

I had hired a top-class assassin to kill them.

“Please kill them all.

“All of them?”

“Yes. Every last one.”

The adventurers knew that I was the person to have sold them the map. In a thousand to one chance, if information about me were to spread to somewhere else then that would have been troubling. I had to get rid of the witnesses thoroughly.

The first party, the second party, and the third party, they were all killed off by the assassin. If I were to confess something here, then it was that I aimed for perfection no matter what I did.

“.....The fourth party is not coming out from the cave?”

At that time, I had received an unexpected report.

The assassin nodded.

“Yeah. I think they probably died.”

“His highness Dantalian does not have any more troops in his castle. There are no requisites for the adventurers to have lost their lives. Check again.”

“I already checked.”

The assassin let out an annoyed voice.

“Was it not a party of 10 adventurers? I looked through the entire cave and found 10 bodies. Although, it was hard to tell since their heads were cut off and their limbs were torn.”

“.....That is strange.”

Did his highness Dantalian have a hidden card up his sleeve?

No matter how I looked, I had watched over the Demon Lord for a year. There shouldn't be a secret that I wasn't able to find out.....

Was there a mistake? I missed something?Me?

I do not overestimate or underestimate people. I, myself, was included in this. Having a level-headed discerning eye was my talent, after all. I could judge whenever a person was sickening food waste in a shallow pile of filth.

It wasn't a talent that was given to just anyone.

"How were the adventurers murdered?"

"I don't know."

"There's a chance that there was an internal conflict."

"I said I don't know!"

The assassin glared at me.

The emotion contained in his eyes was scorn.

"Don't talk to me thoughtlessly. The very fact that I'm talking with a half-breed hybrid is unpleasant! Damn it. I really did decline far..... to be accepting money from some pariah!"

The assassin spit towards the general direction of my foot.

It seems he was feeling ashamed for even breathing the same air as I was. Oh, I am very sorry.

Whenever a person spewed saliva in front of me, I would always wonder where all that bodily fluids were coming from. I could only hope that they weren't pulling

it right from their brains. Their already poor intelligence would only get worse.

“Hurry up and pay up the commission fee. 4 gold per head. That’s 32 gold, to be exact. I’ll tell you this now, but don’t go trying to cut the price now. It is ‘as promised’. As long as everything goes as promised, then everything will end without a problem.”

“Assassins put an emphasis on promises too, I see.”

“Hey, pariah. I’m not in the mood to joke or hook up with someone like you. Do I have to spit on your face and not the ground for you to understand that?”

“Look at my eyes.”

“Oi. You’re going to pay the price one day acting like that…….”

“Look straight into my eyes.”

The assassin creased his brows.

He wasn’t able to lay a hand on me anyways because of our contract. He glared at me temperamentally.

I received his gaze and spoke clearly.

“Quietly. Look into my eyes.”

“…….”

“Count all of my eyelashes one by one. Remember the color of my eyes. The texture of my pupil. Examine the patterns slowly.”

“.....Is there any historical reason for this bullshit?”

“No, there is none.”

I took a small phial out from my coat.

It was a glass bottle filled with a transparent liquid.

“Except, there is a meaning for you.”

“What is that supposed to be?”

“It is poison, for you. Honorable Mr. Assassin.”

“.....”

The assassin froze.

It was always enjoyable watching people’s facial expressions change when suddenly faced with an unexpected situation. It’d be fine to call it one of the small joys of life.

“What, kind..... of bad joke.....”

“The commission fee has already been sent to the assassination group in Niflheim. Your superior told me to pass on this message. **Habitually, waves themselves must know when to stop. The ocean is blue so it is time to cease and engulf the boat.**”

The assassin’s complexion became pale.

“Poseidon’s Call.....”

“It seems to be a verse that’s in common use in assassination groups.”

“Since when, did you?”

“From the very beginning.”

From the beginning.

I may have been exceptionally skilled, but I had requested for a manpower that was ‘disposable’. The assassination group had supplied me with an individual that suited my demand perfectly.

Whether they were making use of their manpower appropriately or not determined the group’s integrity. In that regard, the assassin group in Niflheim has maintained a very wholesome level. Other organizations should learn from them.

The assassin received the vial.

“Do you have any last words you’d like to say?”

“.....”

The assassin stared down at the glass bottle for a moment before taking the cap off and drinking the poison in a single gulp. He then fell to the floor and started to mutter.

“Shit.”

Over a long period of time.

“Shit…….”

The assassin collapsed completely.

I took out a dagger and slit the assassin’s throat. I had heard that a competent assassin could play dead

whenever they desired. Once. Twice. Thrice. And finally for the fourth time. I assuredly ended the other person's life.

It should be appropriate to confess once again here.

No matter what I did, I aimed for perfection.

Anyways, there was a need to meet his highness Dantalian in person.

Conciliating the adventurers and hiring an assassin did not consume a small fee. It was about time to start retrieving my investments.

If, due to the crisis, his highness Dantalian's personality had changed completely…… that would be the best possible scenario. If his character was still the same, then the only person the Demon Lord could rely on was me anyways. It was a gamble that I could not lose.

It was just to my liking.



Now then.

I shall go hunt the ensnared fox.

FIN.

Author's Afterword

Hello, this is Yoo Heonhwa.

The original <Dungeon Defense> is the version 1.0 that was published online and the version 2.0 that was published as a fantasy novel book. The book to have been recently published and is now currently in the safe hands of you readers, is the greatly anticipated version 3.0.

Although, when you think of it as a three-stage evolution, I personally can't help but open my mouth and utter 'It sounds like a protagonist, so it's cool……!', but in truth, there was the tragedy that due to the lack of sales of ver 2.0, the series had ended prematurely. With no doubt, it wasn't the protagonist, but instead it

was an extra who would get hit by the main character once and be sent flying away shouting, ‘Y–You wait and see……!’.

Normally, the line ‘Y–You wait and see’ gave the typical foreboding feeling of being a defeat flag, but surprisingly it really was able to return. I feel like even the protagonist would be astonished by such a tenacious vitality.

Even if this was like a prison with no hopes or dreams, where countless number of extras were cut down by the protagonist known as the market economy, I’m sure no one could have possibly predicted this three-stage evolution. Do your best, version 3.0! Get a good hit on that overbearing protagonist! And to everyone who had participated in the cheering—I’d like to first give my thanks to all the readers who have bought this book.

I believe that among you readers there are certainly some of you who had bought ver 2.0. I’d like to borrow this position to apologize.

I am very sorry.

Because of the author’s lack of ability, <Dungeon Defense> version 2.0 could not run until the very end

and had dropped out in the middle of the marathon. Although I am writing this with the attitude of changing my mentality in order to not go through the same accident again, seeing that version 2.0 is already over, I can only give you all my word of apology. Once again, I'm sorry.

Next, I'd like to give my thanks to the person who had drawn all the illustrations, cocorip. Even though I, the one in charge of the writing, had always passed over illustration planning sheets under a very tight deadline, cocorip had drawn amazing illustrations from start to finish. I'd like to make a declaration that I have never seen artwork in novels as amazing as this anywhere else. It wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that the combat prowess of <Dungeon Defense> version 3.0 was amplified by approximately 13 times thanks to the illustrations. I am delighted that we were able to work on this novel together. Please treat me well going forward as well.

Finally, I'd like to give my thanks to the editor who gave <Dungeon Defense> the opportunity to do a three-stage evolution. If the editor had not given such an impassioned speech that "This extra has the potential of punching the protagonist square in the face!" then the

marathon race might have completely ended there. I may be the person who wrote the content of the story, but the person to publish this story to the outside world was none other than my editor. Thus, if I was the mother of version 3.0, then my editor would be the father and by miracle of chance a couple was established and.....

I'm sorry. That was a small joke. Please forgive me.

Nowadays the weather has become very cold.

In hopes that everyone is able to get through this cold winter safely, I shall end the afterword here.

2016년 01월 13일

In a room with a broken boiler

Yoo Heonhwa

Translator's Afterword

Hello, this is the one and only Shalvation.

〈Dungeon Defense〉(던전 디펜스) is both a South Korean fantasy novel and a light novel. The author is Yoo Heon-Hwa.

It was first published on the internet site known as Joara(조아라) on 2014-07-13, and through the publishers at Yeongsang Note(영상노트), on 2014-11-27 with nearly no details changed the 1st and 2nd volumes of the paperback version of the story was released at the same time. However, contrary to the popularity that it received online, it was not as well received in the markets of rental shops, and thus resulted in the premature completion on the 6th volume. The author had continued

to serially publish the story online on a subscription base separate from the publication. On 2015-11-16 the story was completed on a total of 507 chapters(Approximately 23 volumes worth). The WebNovel and the first book release were titled as ver.1, and ver.2, and once the LightNovel was released those two were then referred to as the old version.

Due to the persuasion from the Novel Engine(노블엔진) editorial department that had been keeping watch of all this, the story was remade to fit the LightNovel format and was then published on 2016-01-27. The author referred to this as ver.3, while the readers titled it as the new version. Compared to the previous release that had no content change, the LightNovel version's content was changed on a large scale. Because of the intensive change, the likes and dislikes from the readers were heavily split into two. Different to the previous release of the story, the LightNovel version of the story has received an incredible amount of popularity and is currently in no concern of ending prematurely once again.

I discovered <Dungeon Defense> around 2 days after its first release as a LightNovel and fell immediately in love with the story. Both the story and illustrations

worked so well together that I ended up reading the book around 5 times in a single week. I have many friends who also enjoyed reading these kinds of novels as I do, thus resulted in my desperate desire to want to show this to them. Unfortunately, I knew that an official English released wouldn't happen any time soon so I ended up translating it myself! I sincerely hope that I was able to deliver the author's intentions with my translations and I also hope that everyone reading this was able to enjoy this as much as I have!

2016년 07월 30일
Shalvation

던전 디펜스 01

2016년 01월 18일 제1판 인쇄
2016년 01월 29일 제1판 발행

지음 유현화 | 일러스트 cocorip

펴낸이 임광순 | 제작 디자인팀장 오태철

담당편집자 정해권

편집1팀 황건수 · 정해권 · 오상현 · 김동규 · 신채운

편집2팀 유승애 · 배민영 · 권소현

디자인팀 박진아 · 정연지 · 박창조

국제팀 노석진 · 엄태진 | 마케팅팀 김원진

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이 책은 영상출판미디어(주)가 작가와의 계약에 따라 발행한 것이므로
본사의 서면동의 없이는 어떠한 방법으로도 이용할 수 없습니다.

※ 잘못된 책은 본사나 구입처에서 교환하여 드립니다.

※ 저자와의 합의하에 인지를 붙이지 않습니다.

일본에서 4천만 조회수를 상회한 인기작, 단행본으로 전격 등장!

이 세계가 게임이란 사실은 나만이 알고 있다 1~5



“홀러들어온 곳은
버그로 가득한 게임 세계!!”

제작자의 악의로 가득 찬 버그에 맞서 싸우는 신개념 이세계 생존기!

방 안에 틀어박혀 오프라인 VR 게임만 즐기던 솔로 게이머 사가라 소마는 부주의 한 소원에 의해 자신이 평소 즐기던 게임, ‘뉴 커뮤니케이트 온라인’의 세계에 레벨 1 상태로 전이되고 만다. 문제가 있다면, 그 세계의 기반이 된 게임이 터무니없는 망게임이라는 것. 신선한 이세계 라이프고 뭐고 당장 목숨이 위협하게 된 소마는 자신이 파고든 게임의 버그를 역이용해 상상도 할 수 없는 방식으로 위기들을 헤쳐 나가며 현실로 돌아가려 한다. 지금까지의 작품들과는 다른, 게임세계의 부조리를 파헤치는 유쾌한 이야기. 한국에서도 빠르게 증쇄되며 인기몰이 중!

Illustration: Ichizen

© 2014 Usabet

PUBLISHED BY KADOKAWA CORPORATION ENTREBRAIN

우스바 지음/이치젠 일러스트/김완 옮김

영상출판
미디어(주)

마검마탄의 사이드스토리 1~3



「제7회 노블엔진 대상」 장려상 수상작.
플리세들이 중첩되고 왜곡된 기묘한 모험담, 개막.

【이세계전이 판타지】에 휘말려 온갖 험한 꼴을 겪고 다시 원래 세계로 귀환한, 평범하지 않은
고등학교생 김현수. 그 대가로 알게 된 진실은——‘나’는 단순한 ‘조역’이라는 것뿐.

하지만 돌아오고 채 석 달도 지나기 전에 또 다른 이야기에 휘말린다.

그것은 다름 아닌, 【이능력 배틀물】.

그리고 이전과 마찬가지로 그의 배역은 ‘주인공의 친구’라는 ‘조역’이었다.

“또 이런 거냐. 망할.”

어디서 많이 본 모습의 과물. 그 과물에 맞서기 위해 얻은 힘은 이미 예전부터 익숙한 것.

이미 터무니없는 경험이 있기에 비일상에의 적응은 생각보다 훨씬 쉬웠다.

하지만——그때 그의 앞에 나타난 것은 이세계에서부터 찾아온 악연이었다.

귀재 카를로 젠이 선사하는 충격적 가상전기, 개막!

유녀전기[幼女戰記]

-Deus lo vult-

1~3



세계를 상대로 싸우는 제국의 전쟁 영웅은 열 살 소녀!?
일본 웹소설 연재 사이트 Arcadia를 뜨겁게 달군 화제작!

전쟁의 영웅, 그녀는…… 나이 어린 소녀의 탈을 뒤집어쓴 괴물. 전장의 최전선에 있는 어린 소녀. 금발, 벽안, 그리고 투영하리만치 새하얀 피부를 지닌 소녀가 하늘을 날며 사정없이 적을 격추한다. 소녀답게 허 짧은 말로 군을 지휘하는 그녀의 이름은 타냐 데그레차프. 하지만 그 안에 든 것은 신의 폭주 탓에 여자로 다시 태어난 엘리트 샐러리맨. 일의 효율과 자신의 출세를 무엇보다 중시하는 데그레차프는 제국군 마도사 중에서도 가장 위험한 존재가 되어가고, 시대는 바야흐로 ‘세계대전’에 돌입하는데——.

© 2013 Carlo Zen
Illustration: Shinobu Shinotsuki
PUBLISHED BY KADOKAWA CORPORATION ENTERBRAIN

카를로 젠 지음/시노츠키 시노부 일러스트/한신남 옮김

영상출판

일본에서 천만 조회수를 상회한 인기작, 단행본화 되어 한국에 상륙!

오버로드

1~9



"이 세계를 그대에게——."

‘오버로드’ 모몬가가 이끄는 길드 ‘아인즈 울 고운’의 전설이 펼쳐진다!

‘게임’ 위그드라실의 서비스 종료를 앞둔 밤. ‘아인즈 울 고운’의 길드장이자 ‘나자릭 지하대분묘’의 주인인 언데드 매직 캐스터 ‘모몬가’는, 게임의 종료와 동시에 길드 아지트인 나자릭 지하대분묘 전체가 이세계로 전이한 것에 깨닫게 된다. NPC들은 자신만의 개성을 얻어 살아 움직이고, 모몬가는 더 이상 이것이 ‘게임’이 아니라 ‘또 다른 세상’이라는 사실을 깨닫게 된다. 강력한 힘을 지녔음에도 불구하고 한 치 앞도 짐작하기 힘든 상황 속에서 자신의 ‘무지’와 신중하게 싸워 나가며 모몬가는 한발한발을 내딛는다.

©2012 Kugane Maruyama
PUBLISHED BY ENTERBRAIN, INC. Illustration : so-bin

당신과 나의 어사일럼

1~3



어느 날 이세계로 소환된 주인공. 소환자는 마법을 사용하는 가녀린 미소녀.
그러나 그곳에서 기다리고 있던 것은 꿈과 희망이 넘치는 영웅담이 아니었다.

“혹시 내가 이 세계를 구할 용사의 핏줄이기라도 한 거야?”

“헐! 아닙니다. 오답! 당신은, 고문용 장난감입니다!!

조금 위험한 ^{You} 너를, 조금 이상한 내가, 조금 외로운 ^{Asylum} 장소에서 만나게 된 이야기.

〈엔딩 이후의 세계〉의 작가 류세린과 〈노벨 배틀러〉의 일러스트레이터 SALT의
화려한 콤비가 그려내는 신감각 이세계 전기.
원작을 충실히 개고했을 뿐 아니라 매권마다 새로운 단편이 수록되어
이미 내용을 아는 독자들에게도 새로운 느낌으로 다가간다!



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